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Current Notes

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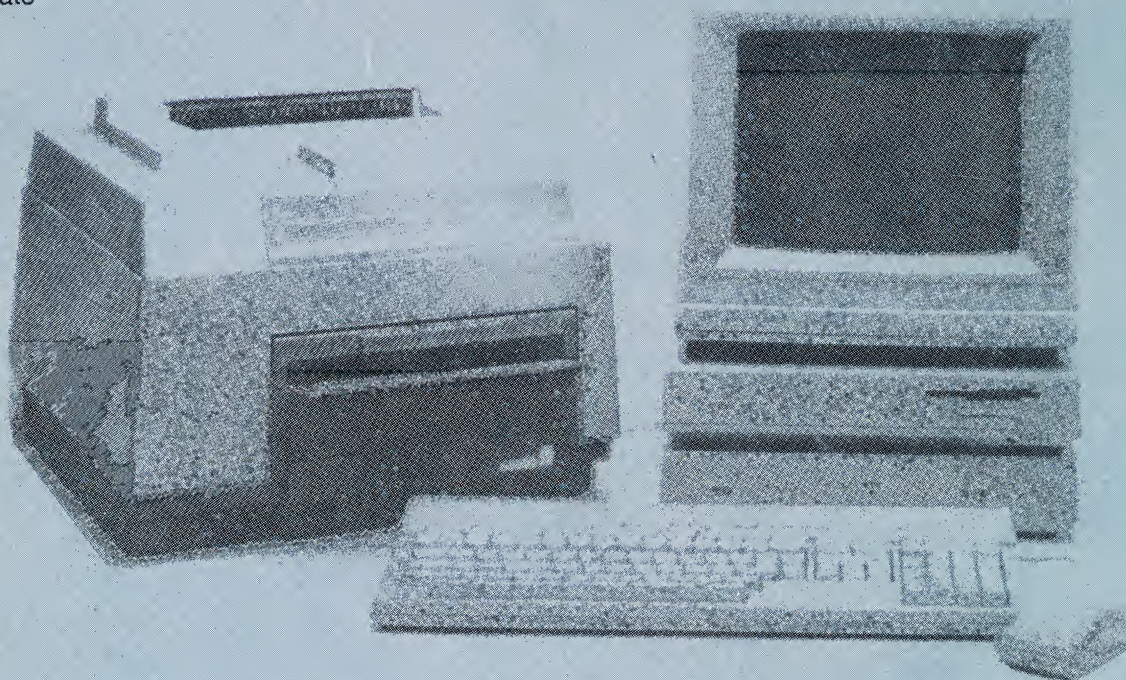
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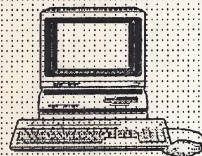
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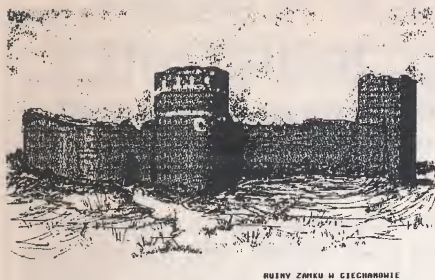
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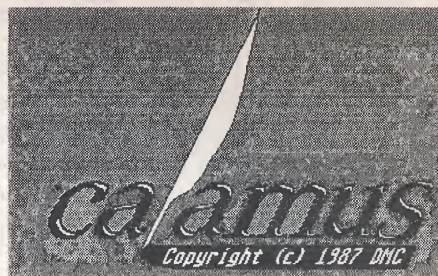
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Current Notes is produced on an Atari Mega ST4 with an Atari SLM804 Laser Printer using Timeworks Desktop Publisher ST. Some artwork is scanned in using the Navarone Scanner.



From the Editor's Desk:



As Atari owners, we all follow the Atari market very closely. After all, if Atari has trouble in the market place, our investments in computer hardware, software, and, perhaps most importantly, "Atari" computer literacy, are threatened. We all want Atari to succeed and watch every little movement for signs of present conditions and future trends. With all this scrutiny it's no wonder Atari has come under criticism. Their record in the US market is certainly not unblemished. Long time owners are genuinely concerned and have been worried about Atari's future. However, Atari does not operate in a vacuum. There are other computer firms out there, some with far more at stake than Atari. How is the computer competition doing?

I could say, imagine you are an IBM owner. But that is not really a true comparison for Atari owners. Instead, imagine you are an IBM stock owner. You may or may not have purchased an IBM PC, but you certainly will be interested in the welfare of "your" company. When IBM entered the PC market with the first IBM PC, they "legitimized" personal computers in the corporate market. IBM market shares in the PC market shot up to the 70 - 80 percent bracket. PCs, led by IBM, had started their invasion of the corporate world. But success breeds competition. Soon IBM compatibles were on the market. Some, like Compaq, were not only compatible, but in many respects, better than the leading IBM. Others were simply cheaper. In spite of the introduction of the AT model, the IBM market share started falling ... 60% ... 50% ... 40%. The clones were certainly taking their toll.

So, what to do about the onslaught of the clones and the eroding market share? The fellows at IBM devised a brilliant strategy. The natural evolution of computer technology indicated that a new architecture would be required to tap the potential of new chips. They would devise a new architecture, difficult to clone, and a new operating system that would carry them into the next decade. Users would be presented with a host of functional programs that made the new architecture and systems software irresistible. In addition, with their advantage in computer manufacturing, they could drive prices down to a level that would be difficult for competitors to match.

But it didn't quite work that way. It was more difficult to get the applications running than they had anticipated and the recent chip shortage drove memory prices up. Instead of the above strategy, they introduced their new architecture without any functional programs, completely dropped their old, standard, PC line, and raised prices.

The market was not immediately bowled over. The new MCA architecture would not use any of the old boards available for standard PCs or clones. The new operating system was only a promise and not a reality. What was worse, to actually tap the new operating system potential would require an extensive (\$5,000+) investment just to upgrade current machines. And, if you did, old MS-DOS software would just run slower.

As it stands now, corporate users have learned more about just what OS/2 means, and requires, and the percentage of users who are planning to move to the new operating system in the near future has been steadily dropping over time. The new PS models, with their Micro Channel Architecture, are selling, but so, too, are IBM clones using the old standard bus, including a lot that are using the new 80386 chips. Most observers expect the cost of memory and storage to continue falling over time. (The current increase in memory costs because of the chip shortage is an aberration, the long run price decline will continue.) Since there are no major applications for the new PS models and OS/2, and since the cost of converting is so expensive (but falling), an obvious strategy is simply to wait if you can or, if not, to buy inexpensive clones using the old bus and MS-DOS. And that is precisely what a lot of corporate buyers are doing.

If you were an IBM stock holder, would you be comfortable with your company's performance? No, you might be just as concerned and upset as Atari owners tend to get with Atari. I haven't said anything about Apple's performance recently, but a similar story of strategic mistakes and lost opportunities can be found there as well. (See Dave Small's column for an Apple update.)

So, as we ride out the winter months waiting for the spring, perhaps we shouldn't be so hard on Atari. After all, there are some positive signs on the horizon. Atari is planning a major push on the US market; the company is paying more attention to its dealer network and to software developers; new, sophisticated software products, such as Calamus and STOS Basic (reviewed in this issue), are appearing on the market; postscript will soon be available for the Atari laser; and hardware improvements such as a new portable and/or lap-top Atari, the CD-ROM, and, of course, the new Spectre for Mac emulation and pc-ditto II for IBM emulation, are here or soon-to-be here.

So, Atari owners, hang on yet a while longer. Perhaps Spring will be better than you imagined. And remember, the grass is not always greener on the other side of the fence.

--- Joe Waters

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor:

This letter is in response to Mr. Wrotniak's review of Turbo ST in the December issue of Current Notes and his subsequent update in the January/February issue. In the review, he made the following criticisms about Turbo ST: 1) It did speed up Word Writer. 2) It did not speed up the drawing of dialog boxes. 3) It did not handle the smaller text font that is used by some programs in high resolution. and 4) The price was too high.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wrotniak both times reviewed outdated versions of Turbo ST. In the December issue, version 1.0 was reviewed, which we had not been shipping since May 24. If version 1.2 of Turbo ST had been reviewed instead, the first two criticisms would no longer apply, as both Word Writer and the drawing of dialog boxes were speeded up. In fact, we were advertising the speed up of Word Writer beginning with the October issue of Current Notes.

Then in the January/February issue, the 1.2 version of Turbo ST was finally mentioned. Again, we were no longer shipping this version, as all shipments of version 1.2 were stopped after December 8th. If version 1.4 had been mentioned, the third criticism about the standard color font not being displayed correctly in high resolution would no longer apply. Also in his update, he said that the speeding up of dialog boxes was not that noticeable. I agree. Since dialog boxes contain very little text, it is hard for the eye to notice the additional speed up. However, whenever a file is shown or a large text directory displayed, the speed up that Turbo ST offers is very easily noticed.

This leaves the subjective criticism about the high price. When

you consider that the blitter chip upgrade will probably cost around \$150 with new ROMs, Turbo ST is a bargain at \$49.95. Even more, it is available now which can not be said about the blitter upgrade, short of buying a Mega ST. However, we do realize that Atari ST owners are by nature very price conscious. To that end, we are offering a \$35 user group special, details of which are available on Genie (file number 9445) and in ST Report (issue # 73).

With all that said, what really matters for you the reader, is whether Turbo ST works for you. To help you decide, a demo version of Turbo ST should be available by the time you read this, on both local bulletin boards and at your dealer. For those of you, who already have Turbo ST, upgrades to version 1.4 are only \$5 when you send in your original disk. We even include a new manual, if the one you have is outdated!

Wayne Buckholdt
President, SofTrek

Dear Sir:

A consistent theme throughout Current Notes has been the need to support publishers of Atari 8 bit software. I would like to suggest an exception to this otherwise very good idea. Earlier this year I read in Current Notes reviews of some software published by Hi Tech Expressions of Plantation, Florida. These reviews were favorable, and a little while later while in a local software store, I purchased a program called PrintPower.

Two things attracted me to PrintPower. One was that it would work with my Okimate 10 printer, which is to printers what the Atari 8 bit machines are to computers (orphaned and abandoned). The

second item was a prominent sign on the package claiming a free gift offer. I purchased PrintPower, completed the relevant paperwork, and mailed to Hi-Tech the forms to get my software. I mailed this on July 19, but now, almost a half year later I have not received anything.

I used PrintPower and was quite impressed by the product, particularly with its ability to use my Okimate 10. A short time later I was again in the software store, and happy with PrintPower, and based on the review in Current Notes, I purchased AwardWare. AwardWare says on the package that it works with the Okimate 10. This is false. Despite clear, unambiguous claims on the package that it works with the Okimate 10, it does not. In August I wrote to Hi-Tech Expressions and complained about this. To date my letter has been ignored.

We should support publishers who make products for the Atari 8 bit machines. This support does not extend, however, to unethical companies like Hi-Tech which put false claims on their packages (in terms of machine comparability and in terms of free offers) to induce you to buy their product, and then ignore complaints about the fraud. I urge all readers of Current Notes to boycott Hi-Tech products.

You will note if you own Hi-Tech products that they have a very legalistic warning in the manual (which of course you can only read after you've purchased the product) that they are not responsible for anything (like living up to their claims). They could sell you a blank, unformatted disk, and you would have no recourse.

I hope that not many other Atarians have been duped in a similar fashion.

Jeffrey Marcus
Silver Spring, MD

[Readers should carefully note that Hi-Tech Expressions of Plantation, FL, referred to above is an entirely different company from Hi-Tech Advisers of Winter Haven, FL. -J.W.]

ST UPDATE by Frank Sommers

The All Important "BigEye"

"The man leaves his jet plane, climbs into the black sleek racer, and..." The voice says, "A man who flies that fast wants to drive that fast."

"Space ships collide, the world spins, and Super Figure emerges to save the day." The voice says, "Want to fly? Fly Nintendo!"

And all of you have seen the TV boardroom scene, where all eyes focus on the "remarkable" graphic presentation that seems to solve the corporate-agony problem of the hour, and the voice counters the challenge of amazement, by saying, "Give us your business, and we'll tell you how we...."

One dedicated, imaginative Atari dealer said two weeks ago, "Look, we and Atari could have been those Macintosh ads, if Atari's timing had been right, been earlier."

What was this guy smoking? What could he possibly have been referring to?

Atari "PostScript" Package

The package that could have made Atari, or at least have made Atari more competitive a year ago, was scheduled to arrive shortly after you opened your Valentines. A \$3895 Atari DTP package with a "PostScript" printer, 30 meg hard drive, monochrome Mega ST4 with Timeworks *Desktop Publisher*. All this, plus the power to light up the TV tube in the corporate boardroom and say, "Yes, we'll tell you how we did it. We did it with an Atari. We could have also done it with a Macintosh. But, if your company cares, the Atari costs half as much." That's what that Atari dealer was smoking, and we submit, he was right on.

All of this, yes, all of this could have been ready "to sweep the

TV, "PostScript", Laptops, Misinformation & pc-ditto II

country" when the Mega's arrived. But the timing was off. Somebody in Atari had bet on *MicroSoft Write* and GDOS fonts, as the writing and printing tools for the well conceived SLM-804. That somebody showed flawed judgement, the kind that gets you fired fast in other companies. *PostScript* was an industry standard in the world of fonts, and to butt your head up against it, if you were the owner of a reasonable share of the computer market would have been risking suicide, but to do so if you had barely a slice of a share, as Atari did and does, raised questions back then about their corporate judgement.

The Silent Promotional

So, now you might ask, why criticize them for having corrected their judgement? They've got it together. The well received SLM-804, one of the best laser printers out there, if it's coupled with the Mega ST (which is the only computer it couples with) now has PostScript capability. So, let's hear it, "The good times are here!"

Except there are no ads. No CEO of any company is being told, or is seeing on TV that his company has "alternative" cost-cutting choices on the expensive computer equipment they buy. There is not even a corporate whisper that an Atari DTP package which rivals other corporate workhorses even exists. So again, timing? A week before the package was to start selling at the dealers, East Coast dealers had not received letters announcing the event.

But the bottom line for this Atari package....Exciting!

UltraScript

At the same time that the Atari "PostScript" DTP package was scheduled to appear on or before 1

March, Atari reportedly was to give the dealers a "promo" package that "would knock their socks off." You could buy the Atari SLM-804 laser printer, which originally cost \$1995, for \$1295! Or you could buy the Atari "PostScript" laser printer for \$1495. The latter would actually come with *UltraScript*, developed for Atari by Imagen. So the question was could you buy the \$1295 laser and then at a later date add *UltraScript*, say, at a time when it might be discounted and less expensive? Here the crystal grows a bit murky, for *UltraScript* as originally created was a software item, which would list for \$295. Now, the question arises, would Atari actually produce a "new laser" with *UltraScript* somehow built in, and there would be no cartridge or software *UltraScript* available for early SLM-804 owners? We doubt it. The roar that would go up from current 804 owners would be too deafening, loud enough to jam all the current enthusiasm being broadcast by loyal users to might be users. And also Atari is not known for quick production line machine fixes. So, while admitting we are guessing, we're betting the printers in fact will be the same, with much hoopla surrounding the considerable discount available for a brief period, presumably until 1 April. And a very attractive discount it is. And the Atari "Postscript" version will be an SLM-804 with a software *UltraScript* add-on. A significant step forward, we submit, and one that gives Atari the right to bring back its slogan about power and price and stamp it firmly on its DTP package.

Entice & Deny

Atari has something of a reputation for being "a tough bargainer." Products are stimulated, programmers are inspired, hardware is encouraged as the reports have it. Then comes "crunch time"—that

magic moment when "the encouraged" meet Atari for "the bottom line ceremony." The result, all too often, is a discouraged, if not angered third-party contributor, who bolts the signing ceremony. The result—a product lost to us, the ST users. Some estimates range from a dozen to three dozen such lost ST programs and peripherals. Example, you cry, example!

Not long ago, a company in the Northwest made "arrangements" with Atari to develop a Unix based network board for the ST. They spent about \$80,000 of their own money to put Unix and ethernet together on a card, which could handle 10 meg of data and would sell for about \$295. The dream we and Atari had been waiting for—the dream to take us smack dab into the business market. Reportedly, the company went with the package back to Atari and said, "Let's go! The market is now!" The response? Well, apparently, Atari had had "a change of heart" about profit shares. The deal collapsed, but not without Atari demanding, according to widely accepted reports, that the technology of the card belonged to them. The developers declared an emphatic "no way." A pro forma legal tussle ensued with the verdict reportedly against Atari. They had contributed nothing to the development of the product. Why report this event? Because for some months we have been hearing about networking and Unix as about to happen, but, as with other third-party products "in train," the "Business is War" motto coupled with the idea that the final contract is where the war begins, seems to have aborted too many of these products.

Good News

During Comdex, the head of the ST project at WordPerfect Corp. had a talk with the Atari programmer now responsible for Atari's Diablo emulator that allows *Word Perfect* to print on the SML804 Atari laser printer. Yes, he had heard about WordPerfect's dissatisfaction with the Atari

Diablo emulator and Atari's unwillingness to debug it being one of the reasons WordPerfect cut back to minimal ST support. Then, after Comdex, the Atari representative contacted WordPerfect, cited the conversation and asked for an update of "the bug sheet" WordPerfect had submitted a number of months earlier before discontinuing support of WordPerfect for the ST's. Marvelous to say, it now appears that Atari is correcting the bugs which prevented proportional spacing, 1/300th character sizing, use of Italics and Bold without the addition of an unwanted space, and different fonts on the same line. If completed as rumored, *WordPerfect* users with Atari laser printers, a powerful combination, could enjoy a serious improvement in performance. It could give the SML 804 the brains it deserved.

As if that is not enough, many of you have been hearing about "an upgraded" version of *WordPerfect* dated 1 August 88. This despite last fall's announcement that WordPerfect Corp. was placing the ST on minimal support. Well, it's true. By the Ides of March, if not sooner, the upgrade will be in your hands. It will repair various printer problems some of you may have encountered, eliminate other unspecific bugs, i.e. the "64K factor" which caused a file to scramble when saved when it was bigger than 64K, had headers or footers aboard along with several other unique items—all of which were necessary to cause the scramble; and finally will allow you to use a GEM file selector of your choice, including the unimpeachable *Universal File Selector II*. For those without access to dealers or BBS's Sara Robinson, 801-222-5945, at WordPerfect will honor your warranty number.

A Different Kind of Virus

There's a bug out there that's creeping into everybody's effort to learn where our beloved Atari companies are going and what it means for the users. The virus seems to

spread via an electronic news outlet. It recently suggested that CN would soon be "buried" by another emerging BBS Atari news magazine, causing the other news magazine to inform CN that they had never and would never make such a boast. Only former Soviet leader Khrushchev would make one as ridiculous as that. But the virus didn't stop there. It went on to report in mid-January that Atari had sold Federated Stores. Then at the end of the month it "confirmed" its original report. Now nobody would discount that fact that Atari would certainly like to work themselves out of one whale of a bad buy. But before Atari can do that it somehow has to resolve its \$27meg lawsuit with the accountants who "overvalued" the worth of Federated. Nobody in the interim will pay Atari its original purchase price of \$60meg plus. Atari isn't likely to give away the \$27 million it claims it has been cheated out of by selling Federated at a discount. Nobody gives that big a discount, except possibly the Dept. of Interior when it sells off government assets. Finally, the Dow Jones report on Atari and its stock has recorded no such sale. So the moral of the story is try to keep it straight. We know it's difficult to do when reporting about a company that is so tightly internally compartmented and when mis-information is so rampant in the community. And when prognostications of what the future of Atari will bring might be right at the time they were made and then become the victim of "a change of heart" by Atari.

Emulation

As the computer version of an old song goes, "Why can't an Atari be more like a PC?" "*pc-ditto*", you say. Yes, *pc-ditto* does turn the ST into an IBM compatible machine, but many claim, including its authors, that it's slow. Too slow for some applications.

It's a plane! It's a bird! It's *pc-ditto*!! Yes, at the beginning of April, at the latest, Avant-Garde will bring

out a cartridge version, called *pc-ditto II*, that will run IBM software on the ST just as fast as an IBM XT, or at 4.77 megahertz. The cartridge is being manufactured for Avant-Garde by Phillips, North America. The price is still a closely guarded mystery, meaning that possibly the Teals who own Avant-Garde haven't yet decided what it should sell for. But all current registered owners will be receiving a "coupon" in the mail which will entitle them to purchase this hardware version at a 50% discount. So it is wise to send in your registration card if you haven't yet.

After *pc-ditto II*, sometime this summer, there will also be an update of the software version of the current *pc-ditto*. It will be version 4.0. and permit you to run it on your ST Mega's. It will support both the Epson FX-80 and the Atari laser printers. Then down the line there will be an upgrade of the cartridge which will support the EGA/VGA graphics capability of the PC's. It sounds like a sound product is becoming even sounder.

Avant-Garde intends to advertise their product in IBM publications as well as ST specific magazines. As Bill Teal notes this will give the ST exposure in a market area where few read or know about the ST and its cost and features.

Lapping It Up

Though this is the Year of the Fax, laptop computer dealers are still increasing their sales over last year. We have talked about the Atari laptop being several months away, like half a year or so. What we haven't mentioned is the likelihood that the Atari laptop will be double-gaited, i.e. be both an ST and a Macintosh. A person with good access to Atari headquarters has reported that not long ago a high or highest official of Atari asked a person close or closest to the inventor of *Spectre 128*, when the latter two were visiting Atari, how she would feel if a person she was close or closest to would come out with a Macintosh-capable laptop

before even Apple Corp. itself did? So as of now look for an ST/Spectre 128 laptop this fall unless things fall apart at "bottom line" time.

Questionable Promotion

Now we will try to keep it simple and clear. Atari will give you \$150 for your old 8-bit machine, if you buy an ST. The way it works is you bring in your old machine, then the dealer will order you a new one and you take your old machine home and two or three weeks later your new one minus monitor will arrive. The dealer will have sent your check to Atari when it orders your new one. But the point is you save \$150, if you're a member of a user group and got one of the promo coupons from your group. You see that's how you get to keep your old machine, you just put its serial number on the coupon and then make your check out for \$649, plus \$30 shipping and handling. But then of course most dealers will sell you a ST 1040 CPU (computer w/o monitor) for \$700 dollars and you can take it right home with you. Sure, it'll cost you \$20 more than the user group coupon deal, but then you won't have to wait 20 days to get it. Is that all clear?

Miscellaneous

Commodore is rumored to be facing a \$59 million dollar law suit for back taxes. That would be about \$10 meg more than they made last year. This makes Atari's reported profit, for the fiscal year, of \$65,000 by way of comparison look a bit better. Another tiny indicator of how the two companies are doing vis a vis each other might be found in the London American military PX. There you will see Commodore 128's and Amiga's but no Atari machines.

Sky Scan will be introducing a hand scanner for the ST in May. It will be priced at about \$500.

Migraph's *Touch Up*, selling for \$189 here and there, is in for some competition from *Flair Paint*, a European product coming soon that will

be a desk top accessory for color or black & white. It can handle up to 12 meg of graphic drawing. It sells in England for the equivalent of \$65.

The Atari CD ROM is still just around the corner. The programmer doing the software is working on extracting any code that might be contested by DRI the original author of the GEM desktop to avoid future legal complications.

Big secret about what's coming in the Hannover show in Germany starting March 8. New, big, exciting product announcement is the leak from Atari. But stony silence all over about what it is, and some skepticism about more announcements and then no product appears for sale. Our best bet is that it will involve the ST portable and, quite possibly, the lap top.

Fleet Street Publisher, in its new sophisticated costume will be released by Michtron by the 1st of March. Interest in it stems from the fact that several people who have seen and dabbled with it believe it is just as powerful as *Calamus*, with equally stunning output, and less complex to use. It will be priced at \$150, but anyone sending in the Copyright page from any desktop publishing program manual can get it for \$50. This is Michtron's concerted effort to get people to switch.

ISD, *Calamus*' distributor, is now issuing a font editor disk with 12 additional designer fonts for \$99.95. ISD intends to issue 31 additional font families designed by Compugraphics. The disks will be expensive by Atari standards, \$200, but will give you about three times more fonts per disk than you get for the same money if you were buying IBM font disks.

ISD is also considering distribution of a European public domain Epson FX-80 emulator for the Atari laser printer, called *Laser Brain*. The manual, now in German, is still to be translated.

Finally, watch the malls for a big joint promotion between Mitsubishi (introducing the Eclipse) and Atari (showing off Desktop Publishing).

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British Titles

Readers of last issue's "Peruvian Connection II" interested in purchasing many of the programs mentioned in the article may find them available from England's Silica Shop. Over the summer a close friend of mine—playwright Elan Garonzik—mailed me a copy of two of Silica's catalogues. These included pages and pages of 8-bit software, including a number of British titles and many older programs now out of production in the States.

Some that I am unfamiliar with include *The Maltese Chicken* (an arcade adventure), *Murder at Awe-some Hall* (a CLUE clone), *Sentinel One* (Defender-like), *Firefleet* (a space action game), *Guardians of the Gork* (rescue ships and aliens from spider's clutches), *Spindizzy* (similar to *Marble Madness*), and the graphic/text adventure, *Lapis Philosphorum* (quite a title). Also popular are collections of games. *Atari Smash Hits 1, 2, and 3* each contain five games to a disk. For the equivalent of \$20.00 or so, **Atari Aces** offers great value—*Zorro*, *Spy Hunter*, *Up 'n Down*, and *Tapper*. Your best value might just be **King Size** which contains fifty (I'm not kidding) different titles.

Old favorites long absent from American dealers' shelves include Sierra's graphic adventure *Ulysses and the Golden Fleece*, the space shoot-'em-up *Astrochase*, and Activision's *Megamania*. Possibly the entire line of Atari Program Exchange (APX) software is listed, as well as most of Synapse's major products (*Alley Cat*, *Shamus*, *New York City*, etc.).

Many titles are on cassette, and some might not be compatible with American television sets. I suggest that you write for a catalogue first. Then, when you order, list alternative titles—ones that will run correctly.

Silica's address is 1-4 The Mews, Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 4DX. You might consider enclosing return postage as well. (You might also mention you read about them in CN. —JW)

Michael Katz Interview

Back in November, Michael Katz, the president of Atari's Entertainment Electronics Division, was interviewed on the Larry King Radio Show. Pat Adkins—professional novelist and CN author—was kind enough to send me a taped copy of the interview. Unfortunately, my recorder ate the tape before I could hear the entire program (sorry, Pat). What follows are some of the major points of interest Katz touched on during the hour.

When asked what made a game good, Katz replied that it had to have sustained play value. It needed to be continually challenging; have aspects of skill and action; allow for playing against another human or the computer; and possess great graphics, animation, and sound. If the game was good, and the product timely, it would be a success. As an example of a timely failure, he cited *E.T.* He won't get any arguments on that one.

Despite many fine products produced by Atari and its competitors, educational software and non-action-type programs sell far fewer copies than those that are action oriented. Also, products geared toward girls generally do not do well (e.g., EPYX's *Barbie*). The primary target for Atari game products is the 6- to 16-year-old male. As a result, for Atari's three game systems (2600, 7800, XE Game System), many sports games, shoot-'em-ups, and other arcade games are being licensed from computer software companies. Katz confessed that the people at Atari are not big risk takers; marketing games of this

sort is relatively safe for the moment.

One of the most interesting of Atari's new products is *Secret Quest* (working title), a Nolan Bushnell adventure, containing over 200 chambers. Hopefully, by the time this information reaches you, this product should be on the market—for all three systems.

Other interesting comments Katz made were that VCR games have been failures because a very limited number of outcomes is possible (as opposed to computer and video games); that Atari has no intention of competing with Nintendo and Sega in Japan; and that the company has been cracking down on software and hardware pirates in New York, Los Angeles, and Taiwan.

Atari! Atari! Atari!

In late January, I was inundated with pages of Atari press releases prepared by the company's public relations representative—Smith Marketing Communications, Inc. Apparently, Atari is making an all-out effort to compete with Nintendo and Sega for those video game big bucks. There are at least four elements to the campaign.

Previously, I spoke of the "Atari Advantage Collector Promotion." To participate in the promo, the consumer picks up a free "Atari Advantage" poster and catalog at a participating store. After each game purchase, the buyer attaches the proof of purchase seal to the poster. When enough games have been collected to earn a prize, the consumer sends the poster back to Atari for redemption.

Rewards include free game cartridges and reduced prices on Atari hardware. In this way, for example, an XE disk drive (assuming one can find a drive) may be purchased for a mere \$50 (assuming one can collect 25 XE carts—assuming one can find

25 XE carts on the market). I'm happy to see that Atari is trying to sell drives. If all of those game machine purchasers bought one, the 8-bits would get a new lease on life.

Price cuts constitute the second effort. During February and March, the 2600 system price will drop approximately \$10 to \$39.95. Atari 7800 purchasers will receive an instant rebate of \$20, putting the price of these machines at \$59.95. Finally--and most importantly--the XE Game System will be discounted from \$150 to **under \$100**. By doing so, Atari is matching the price of the basic Nintendo and Sega systems. If the company can successfully publicize the advantage of owning a game machine/computer, then the XEGS might be a real winner yet.

No system can be successful without abundant and high quality cartridges. In a third move to increase sales, Atari recently announced that it will be shipping over 20 new titles for its three systems. These will boost the video game library to 114 "active" titles: 44 for the 2600, 29 for the 7800, and 41 (are they still counting *E.T.* and *QIX*?) for the XEGS.

The three new titles for the 2600 include *Double Dunk*, a two-on-two basketball game; *Secret Quest*, a futuristic adventure/role-playing game; and *Road Runner*, based on the cartoon character of the same name.

Among the 10 new games for the 7800 are *Tower Toppler*, a cartoon action game; *Impossible Mission*, one of EPYX's action classics; and the somewhat overexposed and over rated *Fight Night*. One very positive aspect of this announcement of ten titles is that Atari is beginning to support the 7800 more strongly than the 2600. With a \$59.95 price, hopefully, the 7800 will win over old 2600 owners and all money-conscious new buyers. As wonderful as it once was, the 2600 is a dinosaur. A hot selling 7800 might convince Atari to stop pro-

duction of the older model. At present, there is a good deal of confusion among prospective Atari owners about the features of each of three machines. By eliminating the "weak sister," Atari would go a long way toward clearing up some of the confusion.

Disappointing was the announcement that only six new titles are planned for the XEGS. These include *Commando*, the battlefield arcade hit; *Into the Eagle's Nest*, based on a World War II attack on Hitler's headquarters; and *Airball*, a unique maze game. Equally disheartening is the fact that Atari does not appear to be offering non-arcade game players much of a choice. Where are the simulations, role-playing games, and such that offer computer users more than the quick high of a shoot-'em-up?

Obviously Atari is acting on the notion, cited in the Katz interview, that the majority of players are young males who like action games. The fourth and last effort, an "exclusive" Atarian Owners Club for Atari video game players, confirms this fact. For a membership fee of \$15, members can receive a laminated membership card, embroidered patch, t-shirt, and six bi-monthly issues of the new THE ATARIAN magazine.

The magazine is published and edited by David Ahl, who also publishes the ATARI EXPLORER. Through THE ATARIAN, members will receive discounts on selected Atari products and have the opportunity to participate in special contests and promotions offering grand prizes. In addition, the magazine will include previews of new products, reviews, game tips and hints, interviews with video game celebrities, high-score records, and more.

Atari video game owners will be invited to join the owners' club via a direct mail offer sent to hundreds of thousands of Atari owners, as well as through advertising in video game magazines.

Diamond GOS on Cart

Before going to press, I received a copy of the 48K cartridge version of *Diamond GOS* (Graphics Operating System) and a disk of utilities from Shelly Merrill of USA Media. Along with the program and disk came a program manual and a Programmer's Kit.

The cart retails for \$79.95, and there is a special price for those persons who already own the disk version of *Diamond*. For further information, write USA at 7810 Malcolm Rd., Clinton, MD 20735, or call at (301) 863-8369.

A review of this product will appear in one of the spring issues.

-----> 8903 <-----

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DEAR DIARY

By: Dave Small

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Dear Diary,

What a month it's been. February is just beginning as I write this.

Activity

Lots of people ask how the Spectre is doing, since I described its unveiling (and gave out awards for its development) late last year. I thought it would be appropriate to bring you up to date.

Take a step back to December. During that month, we shipped Spectre 128's until we dreamed about them. Thousands went by us: pop open the case, put in the PC board, close the case, into the package, add a manual, two disks, tape it up, call UPS or Feddex or the Mailbox...

We *really* looked forward to year's end. "Everyone knows" that after Christmas is a slump, as everyone pays off their Visa / MasterCard bills from Dec. 25. We'd have time to rest, regroup, get ready for the next spring, we thought.

Except that nothing let up. The phone started ringing New Year's Day (a Sunday!), and hasn't let up since. There wasn't a Christmas slump; in fact, activity *accelerated* for us after the new year relative to the Christmas Rush. Unbelievable!

We'd go run off a batch of a few hundred of our informational newsletters--and midway into the week, they'd be gone, sent off to people enquiring about our product.

I'm in the midst of writing the second of these newsletters now, announcing Spectre 1.9.

Right now, the focus of orders is the dealer base in the United States, with increasing attention from

Europe. At first, there was almost no activity in Europe; now, as the (mostly German) magazines that saw our display at Comdex reach the news-stands, our telephones are ringing from overseas, with (to be honest) often puzzling addresses. And dialing overseas is, well, interesting.

While the telephones ring at us, the FAX machine buzzes. Yep, we got a FAXer, because the volume of requests, nearly all from Europe, to FAX something to us became overwhelming. It seems that everything moves by FAX in Europe; I wasn't aware of how pervasive the FAX has become. So, now, we've got our little Toshiba FAXer, buzzing away.

But you know, mistakenly put in our remote FAX mailbox the other-day was a love letter sent by FAX. So, as usual, people have found a good use for the new technology. Good luck, Steve, whoever you are.

So, all this month, Barb's been fielding the phone, which is really getting to be a worldwide adventure for her (calls from New Zealand to Sweden to Switzerland to Peru), and sending out information; Sandy's been getting boards put together, and finding ever more parts to feed the demand, and doing everything else, holding things together, and I've been what have I been doing, anyway?

GCR Work

Oh, yes. I've been teaching Atari disk drives to read and write Mac disks. Once again. Yep, it's Son Of Translator time, this time done at truly rock and roll speeds --1:1 interleave, the same as the Atari drive. It's the Spectre GCR ("Group Coded Recording," the Apple disk format), and it's been keeping me busy. We're shooting to have some

available in April, if the forces of darkness don't fall upon us.

The ZAX

In December, I wished online (on GENie) for an in-circuit emulator. These are devices that replace the 68000 in the Atari with a more or less heavily monitored 68000, and allow you to put hardware breakpoints on addresses, trace back crashes, and so forth. They are a dream debugging tool.

They are also very very expensive. (> \$10,000)

So, I'd checked out the cheapest one I could find, the Nicolet, and found it was incompatible with Atari's DMA driven disk drives. (Weird.) And I'd given up hope on getting an ICE.

Until I got this call from a person with some spare Zax emulators, just sort-of-lying-around-gathering-dust, would I like one?

I offered rare gems, gold bars, quarts of my type-B Positive blood. To my surprise, he accepted a mere company check. Listen, I had the needle waiting, for a Zax; this is a little like being offered a mint Porsche for \$500.

Into the ol' 4 meg 520 it went, and *pow*, bugs started falling right and left. To my poor debugger, they were untraceable; to the Zax, "dey wasn't nuthin." (Fill in a Sly Stallone accent for me, okay?)

I mean, these were bugs I had chased for literally weeks, and not caught. The sound bug turned out to be a "spurious interrupt," something that the Atari isn't supposed to generate (I think?). But try, if you're into this sort of thing, clearing the mask bit for Timer A while it's generating sound while in the middle of a vertical blank, and watch 23 bombs appear on your screen.

I'd watched bombs for some time; the Zax showed me how and where the problem was, down to the CPU cycle it happened at. Pointing the spurious vector to an RTE solved the problem, so sound came up. (Yes, it's in the next Spectre release!)

The flashing "A" bug, where Spectre didn't tell you of disk ejects? Poof; I "watched" the disk parameter block, found where it was being accessed, traced the code, and saw a 0 where I should have put a 2. Fixed.

Zooooom. So, I went plowing through bugs ... only the MS-Word bug still gamely fighting back ... I even discovered bugs in SID, the Atari / Digital Research debugger! (I'd trace code with SID, and on the Zax, and it would do two different things. Scary. This is one reason that the Word bug still eludes me; I relied on SID to tell the truth.)

Well, the 520 eventually died under the mechanical stress to its RAM cabling, so it's in being fixed, and I'm off, well, writing a Current Notes column, doing the dishes (no kidding!), and watching the kids. (Sandy's off at her painting class today, if you're curious.)

All of this teaches me that it is wise to voice your wishes online. It seems to be more effective than wishing upon a star. Less romantic, though.

GENie

As I mentioned in the last section, I asked for, and receivedeth (is that a word?), the Zax on GENie. The "Gadgets by Small" RoundTable there is a thriving area; each time I log on, I wade through an hour or two's new messages, fired back and forth by people who often know more about the Spectre than I do. I learn a lot from them. Did you know the Map cdev only runs under System 6.0.2? That parameter RAM was changed on the Plus from the 512ke, perhaps causing some of my bugs? (I didn't, either.)

The Beta Testers and other SpectreWhizzes (these people run the thing daily, and know more about running it than I do, just like a driver knows more than a mechanic about driving) drop by daily, and add their two cent's worth.

If you're into Spectrating, or Spectreizing, or just inventing words, *grin*, then drop by. We've got a special area, "The Pub", set up just for socializing—we even have a beer topic.

And, oh yes, Tuesday nights we hold a live, on-line conference for Q&A, shooting the breeze, and having fun. We try to have lots of fun there. Wednesday night is the Atari ST general conference, so we warm up Tuesday nights.

GENie is giving Compuserve some real competition; they are both good systems (we just opened up Gadgets support on CIS.) Again, it costs you only about \$150, for a hot 2400 baud modem (Supra 2400), to check out a whole new world online, with more information going in each day than you can read in that day. Incredible stuff. Check into it!

Sandy's currently hooked on the Genealogy RoundTable, where she's swapping information on her great-great-great granddaddy and where he lived. It's a very busy RT, and it gives her access to people who are interested in the things she is, too (just as the Gadgets area does for me). Really, check into this if you haven't already--both GENie and Compuserve offer signup kits that give you a few hours of free time, just to browse around.

She's also using HyperCard to set up a database for genealogy on her new toy, a Mac II. I took her to see one, got her hooked, and around Christmas she demanded another fix ... so who am I to refuse? Besides, she deserved it, having worked harder for Spectre's success than I have. (If you're curious, Barb, the third one of us, got the Hackintosh I built up (see Computer Shopper last year), with a hard disk. She's never had a Mac before ...)

Me, I got the Zax. We're all in heaven.

Soon after getting the II, with its 40 meg drive, I unhooked a 40 meg drive from my Atari and attached it to the Mac. The reason? We were out of room... all the pictures we'd downloaded, and ray-trace generated, were taking up too much space.

Of course, it makes sorting the customer lists a heck of a lot more fun to have a 68020 box doing it at 16 mhz! Not to mention the other fun that the Mac II is prey to ... such as the digitized sounds I turned Sandy on to. (Now, whenever you put a disk into the Mac II, it plays the "beaming up" theme from Star Trek).

Random Pranks

But, don't think I spent all this time programming. I got out the good ol' ST-Replay digitizer (Michtron), hooked it up to the VCR, and got the Spectre 2.0 Hidden Dedication Page (Alpha Test model). The original Spectre "Hidden Dedication Page" was a *sound* -- from the rock band Boston.

I posted the new sound, 2.0, up on GENie for "beta testing" by anyone who wanted to, noting that it was very New Age, with lots of soft wind chimes and the like, so you'd better turn the volume way up to hear it. I noted also that I'd selected a New Age album to play to death during GCR development.

Now, what I sent them was a few seconds of sound from "Aliens," the movie, where one Private Vasquez opens up with a machine gun on the aliens. (Does the phrase "Let's Rock" ring any bells? Remember?)

As one user put it, "When I played that, my cat was sitting on top of the monitor, dozing. Three seconds later, the cat was in midair, its tail was bottlebrushed, it was hissing..."

But, you know, 2.0 just might have to stay as the dedication page. The Boston dedication page (a few

seconds of my favorite part of a Boston concert) has been heard plenty of times. Or perhaps I should put several in?

Products with Personality?

The more I look at this industry, the more that a product with some sort of personality seems appropriate to me. Programs today seem created by faceless corporations, backed up with non-accessible lines to technosupport dweebs... and the manuals are just the pits.

You know what I mean. Take for instance WriteWrite for the PC, from Dwim, Inc., of Sunnyvale. It has 500 vice presidents, four programmers, and one tech support person with weak kidneys and a coffee addiction.

I think that people enjoy someone crazed enough to digitize a machine gun just for a dedication page. The Gadgets newsletters also carry across this sort of thing—a product with people behind it. (As I recall, I introduce myself as resident bottle-washer in it.)

I know, I know, it isn't "professional," it doesn't carry that ol' "image." Yet even corporations are buying the product, and Spectre sales at this point are increasing, to the point where we wonder what we've started here.

I wonder how much of it is access to Mac software, and how much of it is a product with a personality? I'm thinking perhaps of a Gadgets Video ... Sandy's offered to riddle a Discovery Cartridge with an Uzi at the local Firing Line on videotape. And Barb's an ex rock band singer. Tempting. And I don't think I'm kidding.

Off To San Fran for MacWorld

Well, after a few weeks of Packing Madness, it was time for me to head to the annual pilgrimage of MacPeople, to MacWorld in MacSan MacFrancisco.

This year was different from any other, in a way that's going to prove oddly comforting to Atari followers, I think.

The show was deadly dull. (I saw a writeup that said, "Industry Pundits Decry Lack Of Interest At Show"). There were certainly a lot of Suits there, and ApplePeople (as opposed to people), but ... nothing new. Just reruns from last year. The Wingz booth. The Rasterops 24 bit boards. A few more hard disks, a few more scanners, a few more printers. It was just a widening of the market base, not anything *new*.

The "hot" rollout was a major yawn—a Mac SE with a 68030 chip in, clocked at a less-than-whopping 16 mhz. And no color. If this sounds like a stripped-down black and white Mac II, you've got it.

Look, aftermarket people have been pushing 68020's and 030's to 33 mhz in the extreme, and 25 mhz commonly. There are more 25 mhz accelerators for the SE, as plug-in boards, than I can name. What on earth is Apple up to, with a middle of the road, 16 mhz, stodgy technology stuffed into the same dinky-size video display like this?

It's going IBM, that's what.

Remember the AT, with the 6 mhz crystal, forced down in speed at the last moment before shipping? (Even the schematics said 8 mhz, for pete's sakes). Apple's putting out mediocre products, at high prices, and raking in the money. (So are the people who accelerate the Mac's performance to decent levels). Expect to see more thrills as Apple "fills out the product line" with boring products that are all slightly different from each other, but not revolutionary, as was the Mac II or the Mac.

It shouldn't be surprising. While I doubt I'd like Steve Jobs if I met him, he did have a certain push-the-envelope mentality I can agree with. He'd be insane enough to digitize Boston for the hidden dedication page, if he did the Spectre. With the remarkably George Bush-

like John Sculley running things (ever notice how they smile identically?), nothing's happening; the necessary balance of creative madness versus conservatism is gone from Apple. So we get thrills like the IIGs (be serious!) or the 030 SE.

Bill Atkinson had to threaten to *quit* to get them to back Hypercard. (Now that it's a success, of course, everyone's taking credit.) And he got in writing that if they stop shipping it, rights revert back to him. That's the mark of someone who really trusts upper management.

The rest of the Mac team has pretty much long since departed Apple for envelope-pushing companies—Andy Hertzfeld and Burrell Smith, for Radius (and now elsewhere), Steve Capps for his Studio Session sound program, and so forth.

The word I get from inside Apple is that the engineers are still there, the creative people still exist—but under an increasingly smothering load of Middle Managers. If you remember Atari in about 1982, you've got the picture—Nothing Gets Done, except minor stuff that politically won't get anyone in trouble. Lots of MacManagers are ex-Atari, by the way. Remember the incredible dog 1200XL? Remember not getting the 1450 XLD out the door forever? Remember suing people over Pac-Man clones? The resemblance is eerie.

New products represent *risk*. Apple fell on its face with the Lisa, the Apple III, and the Mac (until the Mac Plus came around two years later). Only the steady sales of the Apple II saved the company. You think a new product is a welcome idea at Apple? So we get tired reruns of the Mac, slightly sped up, tired new LaserWriters, slightly enhanced, and at prices that would make J. Pierpont Morgan blush.

Apple finally did offer an incredibly overpriced Mac II with a disk controller chip that FINALLY can read industry standard 3.5" disks—another way of going IBM.

And while there's lip service paid to hackers, and people pushing the Mac Envelope, the heart just isn't in it anymore. Apple wants to be taken seriously--and in doing so, is losing perhaps its biggest asset.

See, the independent developers made Apple. VisiCalc made Apple; so did Excel. ThinkTank, the outliner. Aldus Pagemaker. And they did this with a near religious fervor, a "belief" in the Mac and its design, that Apple is busy stamping out as quickly as possible in the rush to respectability.

So, now we've got rah-rah magazines, with editorials that aren't anything more than rewrites of company press releases (MacUser, MacWorld, particularly MacWorld--they even printed the Party Line on the price increases by Apple, "because of chip prices."!). Just like "PC." We've got Suits checking out how much money can be leached out of this Mac computer thing. The distributors are lining up like morays attaching themselves to sharks.

And the people in the T-shirts skipped MacWorld this year. I saw, what, perhaps ten familiar faces the whole time I was there.

I went for two days, staying in an incredibly, well, quaint hotel room ... \$55 / night .. complete with George the Cockroach, may he RIP, peeling paint on the ceiling, and weird elevator. After that, I'd had enough MacExcitement and particularly enough MacSuits. I just didn't care anymore. There was nothing left for a hacker there.

The change from last year's energy and excitement was tangible. It could be NeXT, much as I hate to think it. Or it could be widespread acknowledgement that Apple's losing it for hackers.

If you think Atari's screwing up big-time in the US, you should see Apple. Take heart.

Maybe Atari will announce the 68030 box at the Hannover show (Germany) in March.

IBM? Right.

IBM? The PS/2 "let's grab the industry" disaster? Presentation Mangler, said to be "ten times harder to develop in than the old DOS mode?" I'll give IBM this one paragraph. Keep trying, M*A*S*H people; I'm not buying.

Hackers

I think the excitement left in this industry is back with the people that started it, the hackers ... and is up to them. The big companies aren't going to do anything really neat; they've gone mediocre. The strange madness that drives a company to make something "insanely great," as the Mac was, dies under the weight of middle management, of decisions based on politics ("I can't afford the risk to my career of this product failing").

Just as mainframe-maker IBM ignored the micro revolution until '81.

What's cool about all this is that Hackerdom doesn't really need a lot of money--just enough to get a computer. It just takes willpower and a bit of work, plus an Idea. The funny thing about it is that beginners usually have the best ideas, since no one's told them what's impossible yet.

For instance, no one told me exactly why the Mac OS could not run on the Atari, back in Fall, 1985. The ST was too new for anyone to know. Only right before the demo did someone get around to telling me it was "impossible"; it was a pleasure watching him eat the words.

Now to be honest with you, I do what I do because I like doing it. To me, the pay only matters as far as "Can I keep doing this?" Imagine--a job where you get to like what you do, instead of trying to make yourself like what you have to do. And no boss but the world out there, deciding if it'll pay you for your work.

If you've got the heart of a hacker, this probably appeals to you. So go have ideas; go dream; go write something. If you haven't got the money to market it, shareware it up to Compuserve or someplace, or onto the BBS networks, with your name on it. Be known; get your name out on a product that's new, hot, insanely great. It's fun. Be a little different. Do something that's impossible.

Go digitize Aliens for your Hidden Dedication Page. Or whatever turns you on. (I got a Spectre in the mail the other day; when I played the page, HAL 9000 sorrowfully informed me that, "I'm sorry, Dave, I can't do that." I rolled on the ground.)

You'll sure as anything be outdoing Apple and IBM if you go for it.

And you just might do something that's never been done before.

Conclusion

Well, there you have it. January's thoughts, a little commentary on the industry at large and MacWorld in particular, and a little encouragement for the hackers out there.

Around me here, printouts are on the floor, hi-lighted sections showing; Apple and Atari manuals are propped open to certain pages. There's, I don't know, six computers hanging around, no, seven now. The phone is ringing; Barb's calling to let me know that someone in France is writing a review, and has some questions. Sandy is doing something she never tried before--running a company on a steep growth curve. And I'm listening to the Spectre going "Beep!" and "Bong!", but then, everyone knows that Mac sound is impossible to do on an ST, right?

Things are happening here.

Ol' diary, it's been a busy month. Maybe we'll get a break in March ... grin, I sure hope not.

See you next month,

Dave

ATARI IN BERLIN

A Revisit

By Milt Creighton

About a year ago I reported on Atari's fortunes in one of the world's major cities during a trip I made to Berlin. At the time I noted that there was no shortage of supply of Atari products (as compared to the starved condition of the US retailers). In addition, I found little penetration of the Berlin market by Commodore. In January I had another opportunity to visit Berlin and decided to see if conditions had changed.

Atari, Wherefore Art Thou?

Before visiting the computer specific stores I visited several of the large department stores downtown. Many of the department stores in Germany have large computer departments and they seem to be a good barometer of current trends, with popular brand names prominently displayed. I started by visiting Ka De Va, the largest department store on the European mainland. It is equivalent in size and quality to Harrods in London (sort of like Macy's in size, but like Saks Fifth Avenue in quality).

Ka De Va has a rather large computer department, maybe the size of a ComputerLand store. In the past Atari had been prominently displayed in nearly every department store in town. Now Atari is nowhere in sight. They still sell ST software, but not the hardware. Instead, I found Schneiders, Commodores (C-64, Amiga 500, & Amiga 2000), Epsons, and Amstrads. I visited several other department stores as well and found the same thing--no Atari machines on display.

I also visited one of the computer discount stores in the Europa Centre--Vobis Microcomputers.

The store was closed, but the window display told it all. There was an Atari 1040ST (monitor not included) for sale with an advertised price of 1265DM (about \$700). The SM124 monochrome monitor sold separately for 475DM (\$265) and the set together was 1595DM (\$885). Right alongside it was an Amiga 500 for 1195DM (\$665). The color set (Amiga 500 and color monitor) was only 1695DM (\$940). The Amiga 2000 only went for 1898DM (\$1,055). It's beginning to look as if Commodore is trying to buy market penetration in Germany, and it's beginning to look as if the strategy is succeeding.

Commodore vs Atari

The next stop was Computare, a major Atari retailer just off the Kurfuerstendamm. This was the same store I visited last year and found the sales staff to be helpful and knowledgeable. Computare is actually three stores. The ground floor is a sort of Computer Land store catering to large accounts. Also located on the ground floor is a bookstore with both foreign and domestic computer and computer-related publications. The bookstore itself is impressive--the magazine

racks displayed nearly every US computer magazine in mass circulation. In addition, there were even more German computer magazines on display on the next rack. I decided to count the number of German Atari magazines and compare the number to the number of Commodore magazines. There were four Atari publications (including one which covered both ST and 8-bit Atari) and six (count 'em, six) Amiga specific magazines! It may not mean anything, but taken together with the lack of product on department store shelves, the implications can't be missed.

Upstairs at Computare is the Atari center where home computer buyers, small businessmen, and students come to shop. Computare carries other brands besides Atari, of course. There were three or four Epson systems on display and a like number of Schneiders. However, in Computare at least, Atari has center stage. As you walk in the door you see a MEGA ST4 desktop publishing package complete with SLM804 identical with the one on display in the store window. Also on display were 1040's, MEGA ST1 (that's right, a 1 MB MEGA), several MEGA ST2, a MEGA ST4, the Atari PC3 and the PC4. Prices were interesting (see table).

Scanners

In addition to the computers there were a couple of other hardware products of interest. One was a 68881 math co-processor made by Atari (at least it was in an Atari box) for 400DM (\$222) and a hand scanner for 898DM (\$500). The scanner was made by a German company and marketed in France and England as well as Germany. There were two models described in the literature: the one in the store which had two grey levels and another which was capable of 16 grey levels. I expect the latter is quite a bit more costly. The scanner attached to the cartridge port on

ST WRITER™ ELITE
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BEKOMME von 850	JAHE Datei
DRUCKE Datei	SECHERN der Datei
EDIERE Datei	STREICHE Datei
FORMATIERE Diskette	VERZEICHNIS
MADE Datei	WECHSEL Farbe
WIREs Flip-Flop	QUIT

The German version of ST Writer
(available with the English and Spanish
versions on CN Library disk #176).

Prices for Atari Equipment in Berlin

(All prices are discounted below recommended list.)

PC4 with NEC multisync monitor &

60 MB Winchester 6,000DM \$3,333.

PC3 with 2 floppy drives & mono monitor 2,400DM \$1,333.

Same PC3 with 1 floppy and 30MB winchester 3,000DM \$1,666.

520ST (no monitor, no drive) 600DM \$333.

520ST (SM124 and disk drive) 900DM \$500.

520ST (SC1224 and disk drive) 1,300DM \$722.

1040ST (no monitor) 1,300DM \$722.

1040ST (SM124) 1,500DM \$833.

with SC1224 2,000DM \$1,111.

MEGA ST1 and SM124 monitor 2,000DM \$1,111.

MEGA ST2 and SM124 monitor 3,000DM \$1,666.

MEGA ST4 and SM124 monitor 4,000DM \$2,222.

To substitute SC1224 monitor to any
MEGA system add 500DM \$277.

the ST or MEGA. The business end was about the size of a man's electric shaver and seemed to produce a decent image in a strip about three inches wide.

Software

The software on display was about evenly divided between games and productivity packages. The Germans still do not produce many games. I saw only one German game—the same one I saw last year. Most of the games were of UK and US design with only about a quarter of them equipped with German docs. There were a number of US productivity programs with German docs and a few from the UK. Most of the German software on display was computer languages, assemblers and compilers. There was also quite a lot of German business software on the shelves. I did see the CALAMUS font editor on sale (it's not yet available over here). CALAMUS sells there for 400DM (about \$225) in case you are interested.

I also spoke with both the manager and one of the salesmen. I asked about the Atari PC machines and how they compared in sales and attractiveness to the ST machines. The salesman told me that big businesses tended to buy the Atari PCs and other MS

DOS compatible models, largely because of their networking capabilities, while home users and small businesses bought ST machines because of their price. He cautioned that this was only a slight trend.

Good Image & High Demand

Atari has a good name among business users in Germany. There is no game machine stigma there. As a result, the PC machines are expected to do well in Berlin since they come so well equipped with the extras that drive up the cost on other machines.

In addition, it appears that the demand for 1040ST's is still very high. In fact, CHIP magazine (the German equivalent of BYTE)

named the 1040ST the Home Computer of the Year for 1988. The supply is good at present, though the store had problems getting them last summer. Right now they are having trouble getting MEGAs. The in-store stock was four MEGA ST4, two MEGA ST 2, two MEGA ST 1, four 1040ST, and one lonely 520ST. The 520ST market is dead in Germany now. There is just too much German software that requires a full megabyte.

What Does it Mean?

I am unsure how to summarize what I found in Berlin. The fact that Atari seems to have disappeared from the local department store shelves may be an attempt by Atari GmbH (Atari Germany) to support local dealers by cutting back on mass market retailers. It might also be a reflection of the increased quota of ST machines destined for US retailers. Certainly, the mood at Computare was upbeat and there was no lack of customers in the store. In contrast to my last visit, I did not see many products for sale there which are not available to us here in the US, and US software is making its presence felt there. On balance, I think what I found was encouraging both for Atari in Germany and for us here in the US. If I have interpreted what I saw correctly, the shortcomings I noted in the Berlin marketplace may simply be the harbingers of promises about to be made good in the US.

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ATARI ENTHUSIASTS IN POLAND

Our Man in Krakow reports
A Correspondence From Tomasz Amborski

[Tomasz is a college student in Krakow, Poland, a proud-and lucky-owner of a 1040 ST purchased by his uncle and my friend in the USA. This article was submitted in December; I took the liberty to clean up his English a little, and to add two explanatory comments with my initials - J.A. Wrotniak.]

What home computers are used in Poland and by whom? The following statistics are based on a poll conducted by the *Komputer* monthly (200,000 circulation) in the beginning of 1988, with the totals compiled from various other sources.

The *Komputer* readers may not be a good representation of the Polish computer users. For example, users of 8-bit machines may prefer magazines like *Bajtek*, *IKS*, *Informik*, and those who use PC-compatibles may read *Mikroklan* or *Informatyka*. Additionally, many people—including some serious hobbyists—who do not own computers, use them in clubs, schools, friends' homes, offices etc.

[Having a home computer is a serious affair in Poland: for example, an Atari 65XE with a tape drive is worth approximately 250,000 zlotys, or six months of average salary. - J.A. W.]

Among 8-bits machines the most common in private hands are:

- 38% **Atari** (800, XL, XE) or approximately up to 200,000
- 38% **Sinclair ZX Spectrum** (in many versions)
- 13% **Commodore** (C64, C128, C16)
- 4% **Amstrad** (CPC646, CPC6128)

There are also some machines from Sharp, Sony or Texas Instruments, but these are considered "non-standard."

[The Z80-based Amstrad is, I believe, being sold in the US by Sears disguised as a word-processing machine for people who would never buy a computer. - J.A. W.]

The 16-bit field is dominated by Atari ST (520, 1040, very few Megas), with the ownership about 15,000. Amiga, with an estimated 1,000 machines, comes in a far second (models: 500, often with extended memory, seldom 1000, almost never 2000).

About 7% of respondents have declared their intention of buying an ST; and 1%, an Amiga.

Of course, the most common computers are PC-compatibles, but these are mostly used at work, being quite rare in private possession. It is difficult to estimate their number, but one may make a guess going into a couple of millions.

Maybe about 75% of STs in Poland have been bought abroad: USA, Great Britain, Germany or mail order. The rest come from Polish Pewex (hard currency) stores. This is one of the reasons that it is hard to tell how many of them are there.



According to Lucjan Wencel (born and graduated in Poland, now the man behind Logical Design Works, San Jose, CA), in 1987 the Polish market accounted for about 2% of all Atari transactions. It is quite a lot, considering that about 50% of Atari sales are made in the USA, less than 20% in Germany and about 30% in the rest of the world.

In my opinion the Polish market is bigger, since we import most of our machines from abroad.

LDW is the authorized agent of Atari in Poland. Mr. Wencel and his firm were doing work (consulting, programming) for Jack Tramiel, when he was still with Commodore. After Tramiel took over Atari, they followed him. LDW sells Atari products and provides Atari service in Poland.

Most of the Atari user activity in Poland is, however, informal. The owners exchange manuals, other books, programs and experience. User groups are quite popular.

There are about 2,000 programs available for the ST, and many more for 8-bit Ataris. I have to admit, that many of them are illegal (pirated) copies. One of the reasons is that no foreign software companies distribute their Atari software in Poland and many people just can't afford a trip abroad to buy necessary programs.

On the other hand, if a Polish firm introduces a product, the people will usually not copy it



(unfortunately, not all are following this principle). Still, most programs come from the USA, Great Britain, Germany, and sometimes from France. There are some made in Poland, but I would like to describe them in more detail at another occasion.

Last November the city of Katowice held the first Polish computer fair and exhibition, with over 50 Polish and foreign companies presenting their products in computers and electronics. Lots of medical software deserved attention, and the view of Mega ST2 with the laser printer made me very happy. In the meantime, you could also watch the *Beverly Hills Cop* from the satellite TV.

But I went there, first of all, because of an unofficial meeting of ST users. Unfortunately, there were only three machines present, but one could meet many interesting people, including the editors of *Bajtek* and *Komputer* magazines, and the people from the Polish ST Club, working on the proposed standard for the Polish keyboard for the ST.

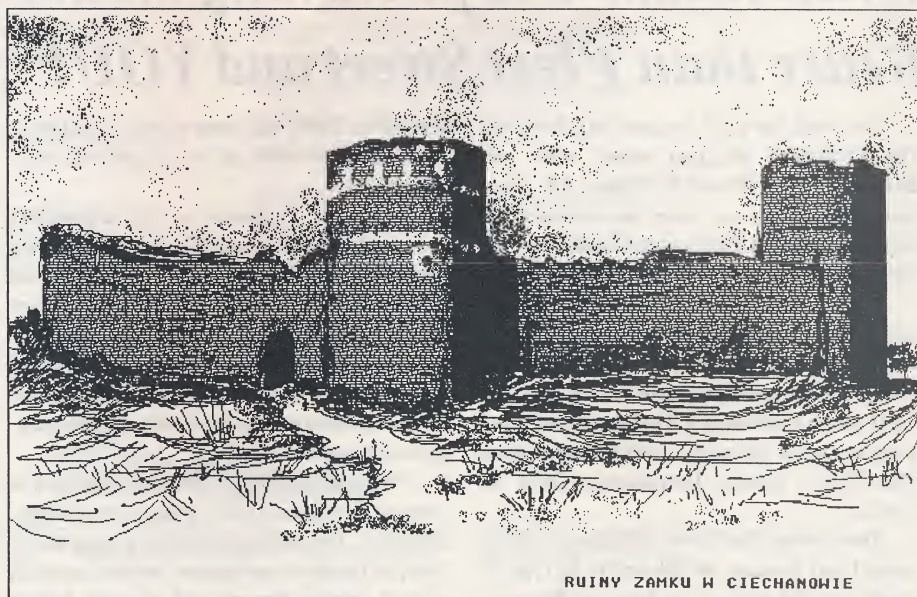
At one of the STs I met the members of the Micro Magic Studio, a group of artists and computer scientists from Warsaw. They use computer graphics and animation for TV and newspaper advertising. The group started about a year ago by joint efforts of four dedicated and stubborn people. They now use 1040STs for monochrome gra-

phics and Amigas for animation. From the STsoftware, they use mostly *Degas Elite*, *EasyDraw* and *STAD* (a German program).

The Micro Magic people say about themselves: "We work in black and white as it gives us more freedom to express some subtle feelings and visions of the human condition as we know it. We think that the use of color introduces chaos and disarray into the viewer's mind. The indiscriminate use of color puts too great an emphasis on form, while for us, it is the underlying thought that is of major importance. We hope that our art will move some part of your spirit, and perhaps give you an insight into the worlds of our imagination and feeling."

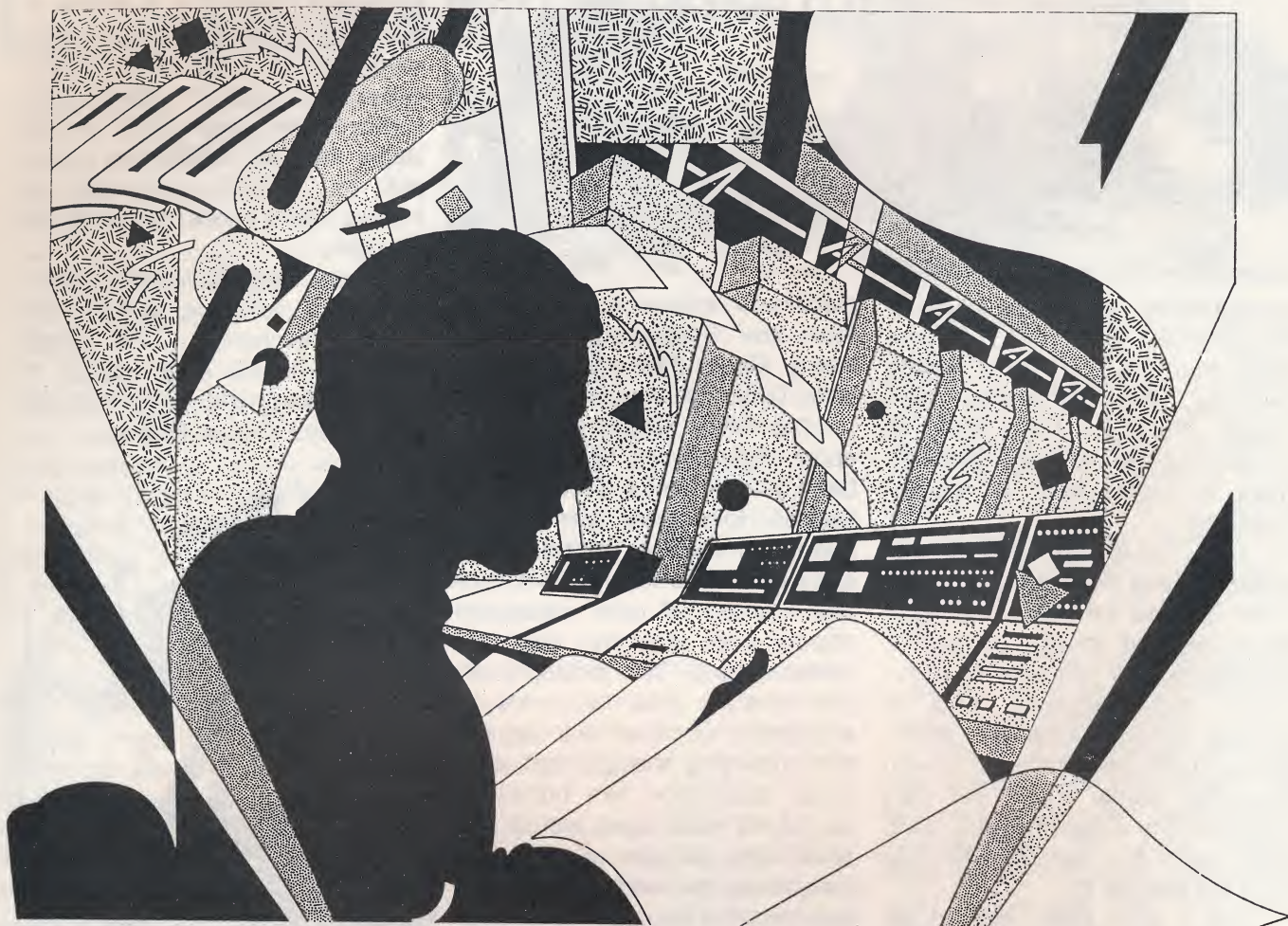
I have heard also some very hard critique of the Micro Magic Studio and their work, but I think that some of their pictures can be presented to the readers. The enclosed pictures are by Adam Kniagin (Adam has a degree in electronic engineering, but always wanted to do computer graphics), drawn with use of *Degas Elite*, without the paper-and-pencil stage. The old architecture shown has its real-life equivalent in Poland. Have a look and judge for yourself.

If you have any remarks, questions, or suggestions, or if you just want to exchange views, please write me a letter. My address is: Tomasz Amborski, ul. Westerplatte 7/6, 31-033 Krakow, Poland.



RUINY ZAMKU W CIECHANOWIE

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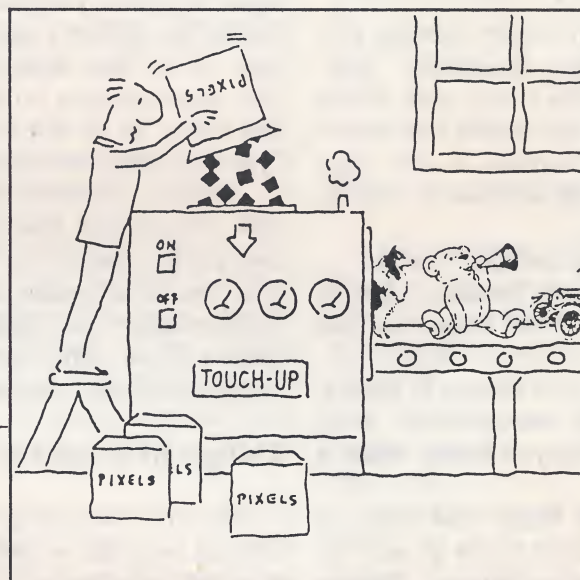
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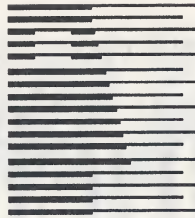
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STARTING BLOCK

by Richard Gunter



All together, now, repeat after me: "Making backups is a pain."

One more time, with feeling: **"MAKING BACKUPS IS A PAIN!"**

Feel better? Good. Now let's talk about backups.

A "backup" is another copy of your data or program files. It need not be a duplicate of the most recent version, and most often isn't. But if the cat eats your latest version, or the Flicker 'N Flash Power Corp. does something awful, a backup copy can save you from a lot of grief.

Everybody has a favorite story about backups and the often disastrous, sometimes laughable, consequences of not having one. Mine dates back to the early days of the IBM 360 mainframe. Seems that one of the computer operators tried to remove a disk pack from the system in order to mount another. A normal, ordinary thing to do.

Trouble was, he dropped it. On the floor. It broke.

We're talking about "bits" all over the floor--bits of metal, bits of plastic, bits of data... Need I point out that we had a backup tape?

Yes, making backups is a pain. A nuisance. Boring. Ties up lots of floppies. Waste of valuable time. All of that. But when you need a backup, you **really need a backup!**

Making backups of your ST's floppy disk library is easy; you can either drag the **A:** icon to the **B:** icon on the desktop, or use a floppy disk duplicator. Several public domain programs do this pretty well, and are fast and reliable. Two such are the Double Click Formatter (shareware), and Hypercopy from Germany--both available on the ARMUDIC BBS, and probably on the ST software disks.

Duplicating a hard disk isn't exactly practical; so most of us are stuck with using a pile of floppy disks, and some sort of software to copy the data from the hard drive to the floppies.

Mouse-dragging folders and files at the desktop works after a fashion, but it's--well--a drag. That's where the hard disk backup programs come in.

Backup Utilities--Taxonomy

Hard disk backup techniques (and programs) seem to fall into three loosely defined types.

Type 1 is essentially a file copier. Files and folders are copied, in standard TOS format, to floppy disks. Your folder structure is preserved, and you can recover

Painful Necessities

the files by simply copying them back to the hard disk.

Type 2 is also a file copier, but it doesn't use the standard TOS format; instead, it uses a non-standard file format unique to that particular product (unreadable by any other program). You'll have to use the "restore" function of the backup program to recover anything.

Type 3 is a sector dumper, sometimes called an image dump program. It dumps an entire hard drive partition to that stack of floppies. The concept is similar to that of a floppy disk duplicator--everything goes. Again, the same program that did the backup is the only vehicle for restoring data. I'd be especially wary of this type; in its less sophisticated incarnations, a restore may fail completely on encountering one bad sector on one floppy or on the hard disk. Come to think of it, a Type 2 program can have the same problem.

Endless variations on these basic types are possible, and several have been done, in both commercial and public domain (or shareware) versions. I've only tried two: one public domain, one a magazine-published program, so I can't give you specific recommendations here. The following are some (personally biased) opinions on what to look for.

Things to Look For

For me, the primary requirement for a hard drive backup program is **reliability**. If I ever have to read those backup disks, it's because I'm already in trouble, and the last thing I need is to find out that I can't recover my files. So, I want the backup utility to run smoothly and to perform a reasonable amount of error checking as it goes. On the restore side, a good error detection/correction algorithm would be nice.

Flexibility and convenience are next on my list. There's no denying that backing up multi-megabytes of data is a slow, boring process at best. The program should make this as painless as possible. I'm willing to settle for a little less convenience in running the restore function -- I may be panicky at that point, but I'm not bored! I'm unwilling to compromise much here.

Both **full** and **incremental** backup options are useful. The full backup is just that; an entire partition is backed up in one giant stroke. You might want to do this at regular intervals. After that, an incremental backup, consisting of only new or changed files, can be taken at more frequent intervals. Fewer floppies and less time are needed for these partial backups.

There are three basic methods available to indicate which files have already been backed up, and don't need to be processed, on an incremental backup run. Each file's directory entry carries information about the file: its size, date and time it was created, and a status byte. In the status byte there is an "archive" flag. Some programs can raise this flag when a file is backed up. In an incremental backup, the program checks the flag for each file, and those for which the flag is not raised are assumed to be new or changed. These files are backed up. The program can then raise the archive flag for these files as well, and they'll be skipped on the next incremental run.

Alternatively, the utility can keep track of the creation date/time, or the file size, at the time the full backup was done. A change in either can be taken to mean that the file has changed, and needs to be backed up again.

There is some dispute as to whether any backup utility should ever change anything in the hard disk directory—even the archive flag. I've heard convincing arguments from both sides. Some programs do. Some don't.

Another, more disturbing situation can arise with incremental backups. Many applications alter a data file by writing a revised copy and deleting the old one. This causes date/time and the archive flag to be reset, indicating a change in the file's contents. A few applications change neither, leaving only file size to inform the backup program that something has been altered. Indeed, while it's unusual to change a file without changing its length, this can happen, too. You'll need to understand thoroughly how your backup program does incremental backups, and think about whether any of your applications might fool it.

Speed is certainly a factor, but may have to take a back seat to more important items. Don't be seduced by (possibly exaggerated) claims of great speed, and give up more important features.

Most backup programs can **format** your floppies for you. It will slow the process down, though. In general, it's probably best to format a stack of floppies (enough for the whole job) before starting any backup operation. I take a few minutes to format each newly purchased box of disks, saving time when I want to use them. I'm not too concerned about whether the backup program offers this feature.

Making **multiple copies** of the same backup is of limited usefulness to me, so I don't care whether the program offers that option, either.

The **verify** option is a disputable one. Several programs will let you specify whether the floppies are to be checked after writing. This may be only enough to verify that the floppy is readable, or it might actually compare the data to be certain it can be read exactly as written. It does slow things down a bit. To be a speed junkie, or not? That is a question, isn't it...

In summary, the things that I consider important in a backup utility are these:

- Reliability
- Flexibility
- Convenience of use
- Full and incremental backups
- Speed
- Verify floppies

The Restore Function

Don't forget the restore function—the "other face" of the backup process.

You should be able to restore any file or group of files from your backup disks, and put them on any hard drive partition you wish. Moreover, you shouldn't have to load the first ten floppies in the stack in order to get to files saved on the eleventh. A read error on a floppy (heaven forbid!) shouldn't cause you to lose everything, nor should a bad spot on the hard disk. Find out what error trapping and recovery features a backup/restore utility has before committing your money, your time, and your data to it.

What am I using?

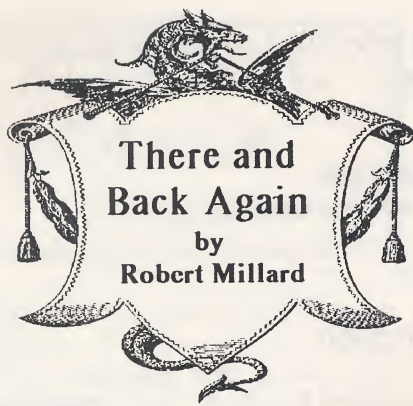
Fair question. I'm currently using TURTLE, a public domain program by George Woodside. It's a Type 1 program, and falls a bit short in some of the areas I've mentioned. However, it has respectable speed, a lot of users who attest to its reliability, and is quite easy to use. It lacks a restore function, but I've found one that seems to work reasonably well: UNTURTLE by Mike Matthews.

Backup Plan? Yep. Without a rational, routine plan for taking backups, you're eventually going to get into trouble. No software can do it all for you. But we'll have to talk about backup plans another time.

Pebbles From the Bit Stream

Lately, I've been accumulating some odds and ends that I'll try to share with you. This one concerns *Word Perfect* and the Timeworks *Publisher ST*. Ever notice two words run together **likethis** in a DTP document? It happens because the "soft page" marker that WP embeds in the text to mark its page boundary isn't converted to a blank (space) by DTP. It's just ignored, e.g. causing the last word from one (WP) page to run up against the first word from the next page. I know of no way to fix this, except to proofread the final DTP document very carefully.

Here's another. If you autoboot from your hard disk, you don't have to have a disk in floppy drive **A:**, but the boot sequence will go a few seconds faster if you do. A blank (formatted) disk works fine.



SINBAD & THE THRONE OF THE FALCON

The Sultan of Swap—as in disk swap—is what 512K ST owners will proclaim Cinemaware's latest Atari offering, *Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon*. While the game runs beautifully on machines with one meg or more, *Sinbad* on a 520ST can require 50 to 100 disk swaps in the hour or two it takes to complete a successful quest. The hardware specifications label on the package states "1 Megabyte RAM strongly recommended," but this reviewer feels compelled to echo the caveat louder, to the point of beginning this review as such. That said, *Sinbad* feels initially weaker than Cinemaware's previous efforts, *Defender of the Crown* and *S.D.I.*, but still bears the signature of that company's bold, innovative style.

Sinbad's journeys take place on four land masses and nine islands that scatter forty game locations—cities and geographic regions, all abstractions. In fact, travel is almost entirely represented by two screens. One is a view of Sinbad's back as he reads a crossroads signpost indicating the current and adjacent locations. Click on an adjacent location and poof!—you're there—on the same screen, but with a different signpost. The second screen is a view of Sinbad's desk aboard ship, showing an open Captain's log. The left page shows the current location, the right page shows nearby locations. Click, poof, you're there—same screen, updated log. You'll see a lot of these two screens, but don't worry, there are many events to break the monotony.

Each time a new game is started, the program relocates three non-player characters, three idol statues, a genie, three monsters, and the black prince. You will visit most of the forty locations seeking them out. Sinbad's quest is to recover four items needed to break a spell that has transformed the Caliph of Dameron into a falcon. There is a time limit on his journey. A successful game is usually begun by locating the non-player characters. As each is found, it will appear in front of the crossroads signpost. Conversation takes place between two flipping screens: close-ups of Sinbad and the NPC. There are usually three responses to choose for Sinbad after each NPC statement. A little tact will draw the needed information, then it's off to retrieve the items. And on to the arcade onslaught.

The Deadly Prince

There are five arcade sequences in *Sinbad*; only two, swordfighting and the earthquake sequence, will require much practice. There are six adversaries in swordfighting: a centaur, a skeleton, a yeti, the black prince, a six-armed god, and the deadly Prince Jamoul. Sinbad moves left to right, and has four combat options: normal swing, high swing, low swing, or parry. The action is much faster than the swordplay in *Moebius*, but it lacks dynamics. The earthquake sequence is sort of like Donkey Kong versus the San Andreas Fault. Sinbad must jump up and across ledges, and climb vines attempting to surface from a crack in the earth. Falling boulders further obstruct

him, and after a while, the crack seals shut, ending the game if Sinbad has not surfaced. Earthquakes happen at least three times in a successful quest, and are the closest the game gets to the adrenaline surges *S.D.I.* induced. Until you face Jamoul, that is.

One Mistake And.....

The other three arcade sequences involve shooting a strange bird with a crossbow, clobbering a cyclops with a slingshot, and steering Sinbad's ship through rocks while trying to rescue shipwrecked sailors. At first, these sequences seem mundane and/or too easy. But in most of the game's arcade aspects, one slip-up means the end of the quest. Since you cannot save to disk, as with the Amiga version, that benign little cruise through the rocks gains much magnitude towards game's end. That cyclops you laughed at earlier becomes a dreaded encounter. And that third earthquake reads high on the Richter scale of your nerves. As with all Cinemaware games, the product is meant to be experienced in toto; early impressions playing *Sinbad* are likely to improve upon completing, or nearly completing, a successful quest.

There are two strategic faces to *Sinbad*; one is superfluous, the other depends on the "gamesmaster" within the program. The primitive wargame built into the game rarely affects the outcome, and should either have been discarded, or integrated into other events. Finding the black prince ends the wargame, usually before the battle heats up. From there, maintaining a

crew, conserving Sinbad's hit points (represented by a blue bar graph on the left of the screen), and finishing within the time limit are the only strategic considerations. How interesting these factors are depends on the layout of locations for a particular game, and how tough the same game is in terms of disaster frequency (earthquakes and sea storms) and recruiting luck. Here, too, those mundane arcade sequences can be magnified. In a particular game where you have acquired most of the items but are dangerously low on crew members, the storm sequence allows you to gain members by picking up shipwreck survivors. They are, however, usually placed close to dangerous rocks; steer too close and the game is over. Factors like this make some attempts at beating the game far more interesting than others.

Uneven Art Work

Cinemaware is synonymous with excellent graphics, but the artwork in *Sinbad* is uneven. The best work is seen in the non-player characters (although the old gypsy woman looks more like a borsch circuit comedian to this writer, who kept expecting it to say "Take my harem...please"). This criticism of the game's artwork was true for the Amiga version as well, but the Amiga-ST graphics gap is clearly wider in *Sinbad* than in the company's previous two ST efforts. Paraphrasing a line from a recent vice-presidential debate, you might quip, "Sinbad, you're no *Defender of the Crown*."

The music score by Bill Williams is very good, and punctuates the different events in the game effectively, but it is not as fresh or memorable as Jim Cuomo's excellent music for *S.D.I.* and *Defender of the Crown*. Since reviews of the Amiga version were overwhelmingly favorable, perhaps the hardware handicap is more evident with Bill's material.

Arcade Sequences

Cinemaware bills their ambitious efforts as "interactive movies." For many adventure gamers who would not be caught dead playing *Barbarian* or *Starglider*, the arcade sequences in a game like *Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon* are enjoyable, made so by the cinematic atmosphere; an illusion of depth is created, a reason to blast Soviet spaceships, dismount jousting knights, or slash Prince Jamoul into the dust. Critics pick at individual aspects of these games, instead of reviewing each as a whole. One critic, reviewing *Defender of the Crown*, wrote that if you're looking for a better-looking *Ultima*, steer



clear. Misguided scribe! A new game genre is upon us. Somewhere down the road, past *The King of Chicago* and *Rocket Ranger* (both available for the Amiga and ostensibly forthcoming for the ST), Cinemaware games will be critiqued by that famous software review team of Kunkel, Katz, Worley, Siskel, and Ebert.

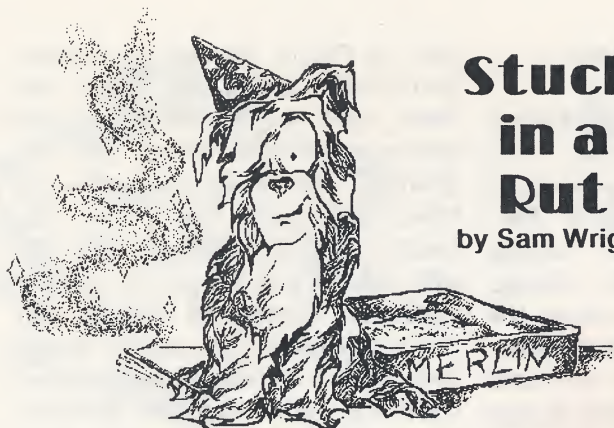
WARNING! DO NOT READ THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH IF YOU DO NOT WANT CLUES TO *SINBAD AND THE THRONE OF THE FALCON*.

After a few plays with the game, you will probably decide never to incur Libitina's wrath, so that she will

not sic Prince Jamoul on Sinbad. You'll finally get all four items--the three eyes and the Yeti paw, or whatever damned animal part the Shaman wants vivisectioned--and think you're home free. Wrong, pita breath! Libitina suddenly appears with Jamoul, and the prince cuts the weakened Sinbad to shreds with three passes of his sword. Game over. Prince Jamoul is the toughest nut in the game: consider eliminating him before doing anything else. Get the gypsy's charm, then find Libitina and choose wimp responses like "I meant no offense." Libby hates weak men, and wishes to rid the world of them. Enter Prince Jamoul. Move closer to Jamoul after he stops in front of Sinbad, then parry, and find the right height to swing. If Sinbad dies (a likely outcome), little game time has been invested. If he is too weak after beating Jamoul, the game can be restarted in a few seconds. If Sinbad wins, Jamoul and Libitina are out for the rest of the game. Get the four items and you're home free. If the genie still owes you a wish, wish for the earth to be still, just to be safe on your way back to the Shaman.

Misty Writings

Regular readers have probably noticed that I've started to review adventures other than pure role-playing games. To some extent, this has been a necessity while we all await *Chaos Strikes Back*, *Pool of Radiance*, *Ultima V*, and *Starflight*. But I've also attempted to make CRPG fans aware of some related games that may draw their interest. *Sinbad* is as anomalous a game as you will read about in *There and Back Again*. Some of the other non-CRPG games I'm considering reviewing are: *War in Middle Earth*, *Sorcerer Lord*, and *King's Quest IV*. I welcome any feedback about the column, or any questions about the games I've reviewed. As always, I can be reached on GENie (R.MILLARD1), or by writing to Current Notes.



Stuck in a Rut

by Sam Wright

The Lurking Horror

The Lurking Horror is Infocom's entry into the horror genre. Deemed a cross between Stephen King and H.P. Lovecraft, it promises to keep you glued to the monitor...with the lights on, of course. The following hints, questions, and answers are provided to supplement the game, not substitute for it (shades of Cliffs you thought you had left at school, eh?).

- In general, before giving up and looking at the hints, you should roll a puzzle around in your head for a few days. Don't think about it; do something else before going back to it. Often a good night's sleep or a fresh perspective can do wonders for your deducting ability.
- Always imagine the situations as if you're really experiencing them.
- Ethics are generally important; for instance, if walking up to an unknown house, you wouldn't barge right in. Politeness is a virtue.
- When beginning an adventure, first explore the area to get a basic feel for it. Think of it as the visit before the stay.
- Make a map.
- Objects are pretty much used once and then can be discarded. I usually gather them all into one room so I can easily find them. In the case of *The Lurking Horror*, however, it may not be a good idea because of the pack rat disguised as an urchin.
- If you find clothing, wear it.
- If you find food and drink, hold off on eating and drinking until you begin to feel hungry and thirsty.
- Don't attempt to kill every human or human-looking person you come across. You may be in for a nasty surprise.
- Save the game frequently.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

I'm barely able to keep my eyes open. How do I get replenished?

Try sleeping, but remember that you have a paper due tomorrow. It might be best to make the night an allnighter. "Twice the caffeine..."

What can the hacker do?

He's useful for breaking codes and getting into locked systems. Trouble is, he's been too wrapped up in his work to remember the last time he had a good, warm, home-cooked meal.

How do I enter the Computer Center on the third floor?

Trying to enter the Computer Center on the third floor has no effect.

What do I do about all the junk in Dead Storage?

That's a lot of junk. In fact, there's so much junk, you can't even see the east wall.

How can I see the east wall?

There's too much junk there to see it.

Where's my operator's license?

Perhaps it's lost in the junk.

Before the Altar, what lurks beneath the iron plate?

You don't want to know.

How do I get past the maintenance man riding in the floor waxer?

Axe him if he'll turn it off for you.

He's coming after me! What do I do?

He's walking like an Egyptian; he's not wearing sneakers.

How do I get past the monster on top of the Brown Building?

Ignore Freud and interpret your dreams literally. You never know what you may dig up, but don't forget to reclaim what you lose.

What's the significance of the professor? He just stands there looking at me.

He's there to teach, but this time he may benefit from learning something (never mind your own welfare).

I seem to be the star of a Geraldo special on the occult.

Cut it out. Just because it's a horror story doesn't mean it dabbles in the supernatural.

Sorry. How do I exit the lab?

Something lifts a few inches, but then hits something and goes no further.

I forgot to get something. Where's the computer disk?

Back in Planetfall's helicopter.

The urchin keeps taking my things! What can I do about him?

He has a queasy stomach. Try taking that from him.

I've got to hand it to you, the urchin was useful after all! Now how do I get past the rats?

Rats get steamed if there's a sudden and close change in temperature.

How do I get past the giant multicolored moose? Have you tried saddling him up? Moose aren't afraid of the cold. Nor of waist-high snow.

I'm looking through a hole at the end of the steam tunnel. How do I make that a passageway? Recall where you've seen what's in the hole before. Where else in the game is that same object?

I'm listening to the music from Shaft, provided through a touch of vandalism. Is there any way to turn the channel?

No, but you may be able to turn up the sound a bit. You should now have everything bar one. When is a tool not a tool?

When it's an unknown tool? Ah, I see what you mean. But now I'm stuck in the maze. Let your fingers do the walking.

Yikes. I'm in the Inner Lair! What do I do? Think of where the electric company gets its power from, through switches and all. But don't stick your fingers into the wall socket.

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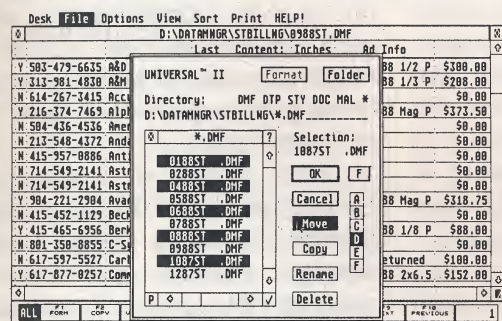
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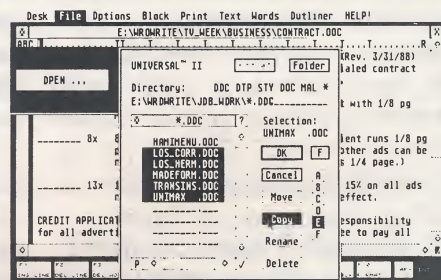
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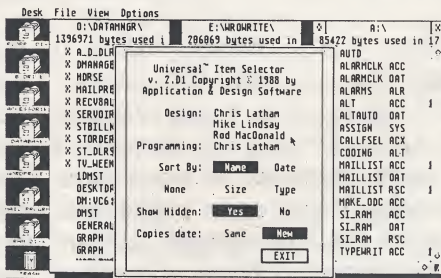
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The Junkyard Pussycat



by
John
Barnes

About This Column. Over the years the editors and publisher at Current Notes have printed a lot of my stuff. I have been free to submit or not as I see fit. This column represents a change of direction wherein I try to establish continuity while maintaining my independence, take strong stands while ranging freely, and to otherwise help make Atari computers more useful to everyone while groveling to no one. I don't expect to become popular in this way but I do hope to give everyone something to think about.

What User Groups Can Do For Themselves. For this first column I choose to take a look at User Groups and how they can contribute more to the Atari community.

Recent statistics indicate that there are declines in user group membership in many places. Should we be concerned? Should we (or can we) do anything to reverse the trend?

This month I have decided to look at steps groups can take to improve their own lot. This is only part of the story, and I hope to explore some further avenues in future issues.

The Early Days. When I bought my first Atari 800 back in 1981 I had to go to a user group to find out anything at all. Computers truly were "personal" in those days. I suppose these early participants felt a bit like the airplane builders and barnstorming pilots of another era. With the faster pace of modern life the developments in the personal computer world that parallel

those spanning the time from Kitty Hawk to the Boeing 747 were compressed into the space of less than 10 years.

Help in the form of information, products, and entertainment was the mainstay of user groups then and it remains the mainstay now. What, if anything, has changed? I believe that competition is the answer. With the maturing of the personal computing industry users have many alternative sources for the information and products they need.

The User Groups have indeed lost their once-dominant roles to become just one kind of fish in an increasingly crowded pond.

Commodity PC's. Software and hardware are now commodity items, like VCR's, compact discs, and automatic bread makers. Game machines are enjoying a resurgence precisely because they are being marketed in the same way as the latest toys or junk cereals.

Apple Computer and Microsoft Corporation grew out of the efforts of lonely hardware and software hackers. Megacorporations like AT&T, IBM, and General Electric have spied lucrative opportunities in the world of personal computing. In short, personal computers are now big business.

The increased power of the machines has made for increased complexity in programming. The home-brewed programs of a few years back look pretty tacky now. Tightly managed teams have replaced the solitary programmer and the guy who made his own printed circuit boards. The marketing man has as much to say as the programmer. Packaging is often more important than performance. Merchan-

dising is now done by national chains who ruthlessly discount prices.

Aside from the game machine side of things the biggest changes began when Big Blue put its products onto Everyman's desk, converting the white collar office into an electronic sweatshop. Trivia games that were once played on mainframes could now be done in real time right at one's own desk. Once the machines attained an aura of corporate respectability and became little larger than a breadbox they could find a niche in the home study. After all, dad could steal all the software he needed from the office and maintain his mailing lists at home instead of at work.

Enter the Media. With the growth in the market came a growth in media coverage. Magazines grew out of newsletters and authors sought national audiences. Increased competition meant more emphasis on packaging and appearance. Once these efforts were scaled up they had to get corporate support. More advertising, more glitz to the news, more hype for the products.

New kinds of media have become important. Electronic bulletin board systems started out as a cottage industry and are now national. GEnie and Compuserve have thousands of files for downloading. Copies of new software zoom across the country and around the world as fast as the phone circuits can carry them. Producing "public domain" software is now an exercise in mass marketing. Distributing it has also moved from the home workbench into the stores and post offices.

Given the scope of these alternatives it is little wonder that the computer consumer can forget about heading off to an uncomfortable meeting room on a certain night. Why go out in the cold (or the heat) when all you have to do to get instant gratification is lift your phone and give your credit card number? And of course there is no need to wait until the third Thursday or the second Sunday of the month to get your new Public Domain disks when you can simply drop into the nearest retail store and pick them out of the rack.

The Burn-Out Factor. Take the conditions in the marketplace and factor in the well-known observation that memberships in voluntary service organizations typically last for about five years and it is easy to see why many of the familiar faces from the early days of many user groups are no longer there.

Include the fact that many of Atari's consumers have, for very pragmatic reasons of their own, succumbed to the blandishments of other commodity computer manufacturers and you might wonder why the attrition has not been greater.

The business that the groups are in has matured, and volunteer work for a mature business often looks more like drudgery.

We cannot ignore demographic factors in our larger society. Volunteer work is no longer so important in a nation marked by two-earner families for whom leisure time is too precious to devote to strangers and whose worries about the cost of educating their children or fending off medical costs consume too much of their creative energy.

The Need is Still There. The continuing success of WAACE's AtariFests is evidence that today's computer consumers still value the personal touch.

Expertise with a human face, shared experiences, and the primacy of consumer interests are still

important. If we tend to lose sight of these amid the hue and cry raised by the media and the hucksters perhaps that is because those of us who care are not being aggressive enough in our own marketing or because our products are not good enough.

If our merchandising role has been taken up by others we need to emphasize the other, more personal, aspects of our organizations.

Sell Thyself. The problem is basically one of marketing or, if you prefer, outreach. User groups need to reach out to potential consumers, in some cases aggressively.

Keep your existing members. Track non-renewals of group membership. Dissatisfied customers are your best clue to needed improvements.

Seek new members wherever you can find them. Put membership information packets out in stores. Show the flag at shows like AtariFest. NOVAtari acquired over 50 new members in this way from the '88 Fest.

Offer good products with good delivery and support. Filter public domain offerings to pick out the most useful and interesting items. Repackage to provide more useful disks, and evaluate quality to eliminate dogs. All of these steps add value to this important resource. Water, after all, is basically free but there is a good profit to be made if you can turn it into beer.

Keep in touch with the real world. Maintain contact with local retailers. These people, who are trying to make a living satisfying the consumer, are on the front lines when it comes to new hardware, new software, and other consumer needs. On the other hand the retailers can use the experts in the groups to help satisfy buyers' needs for training and assistance with some of the products they sell.

Keep on top of the news. The consumers in the audience are starved for information. There are lots of

rumors floating around, new products keep appearing, and new problems keep cropping up. People who cannot answer questions or present new insights on these subjects soon lose their standing as experts.

Turn consumers into producers. We often get so wrapped up in the mechanics of running the organization that we forget to use the talents of the people who are not on the executive committee. Draw people out, solicit their views. You will be surprised at how many budding experts there are. Let them make the demonstrations or write up the documentation on new releases. Build an assistance locator. Find new experts and develop them. Perhaps they can take your place tomorrow.

Reward your workers. Give people support when they undertake some new initiative. An occasional award like a certificate, a plaque, or even a ticket to the AtariFest banquet may help show that you care.

Leave time for people to mingle. The swap table and the library table are two places for this, but someone should be available simply to chat up the members and find out what their interests really are.

Conclusion. Most of the suggestions given above are simple common sense. It is a fact of life that some people have to work hard just to have fun.

Having made many suggestions for the group leaders, I finally have two for the members: 1) Volunteer. It's not as hard as it sounds and you will be paying the group back in the only currency that means anything - your support and interest. 2) Take some time. Stick around to ask questions after the formal part of the meeting. This may require some persistence as the experts may very well be busy. Give the workers in the group a chance to help you.

My Compiler Can Beat Your Compiler!

Do the benchmarks really mean anything? What should we look for when choosing a computer language?

How fast will your program run? How much does its speed depend on the language you are using? Should the efficiency of produced code be a factor when you are choosing a compiler?

No, I don't think we should concern ourselves *too much* with the speed of the resulting code. Besides, one compiled language should run, more or less, as fast as another.

The Speed Hype

The last statement seems to contradict some authors, who—without bothering to check by themselves—state, for example, that *"the XYZ Basic is much faster than Pascal, approaching in speed C"* (I am quoting—from memory—an article in one of the ST magazines).

Of course, the syntactic constructs of some languages (C among them) can be closer to the machine command set, than of some others (notably Ada). This makes generation of efficient code in the latter group a somewhat more difficult, although not impossible, task. On the other hand, a smart compiler will do an equally good job here: is it really so difficult to notice, that `X := X+1` in Modula-2 means the same as `x++` in C?

I remember a story from the early Seventies, when the head of the computing center of my department decided that our mainframe resources were overstretched. So, he wanted to ban programming in

by J. Andrzej Wrotniak

Algol and switch over to the, supposedly, more efficient FORTRAN. Luckily enough, however, the guy had just completed a library of different random-sampling routines in the latter language, and I had a similar library of my own, written in Algol. A head-to-head comparison demonstrated that the Algol version was faster—by a factor of two. Was Algol a faster language? No, just, modesty aside, smarter algorithms.

Consider another example. Why does the Atari Resource Construction Set take so long, when saving a large resource, sorting the object names? Because it is written in C instead of assembly? No, I can make a bet, that some programming wizard used, without giving it a second thought, a bubble-sort algorithm in this place, instead of anything better. For a small number of objects the difference is hardly noticeable, for a larger one (say, a 30k resource file), it may reach a factor of 100 or more. This is why I still use the Atari RCS (after having tried Kuma RCS and WERCS): you click on "Save", go to fix yourself a sandwich, and come back just in time. How practical!

Benchmarking

Just recently I moved a piece of an old program I wrote in FORTRAN quite long ago, into Ada, the ultimate language, on a VAX. The comparison of speeds has shown

that the Ada version (although a delight to write and debug) was slower by a factor of 1.7. Quite a difference, but not as large as I feared.

Then, just for the fun of it, I decided to run a similar—although much simpler—test on the ST using all the language compilers (or interpreters) that I have. Being an avid collector of languages (every time I'm about to leave L&Y Electronics, Mrs. Linton, knowing this weakness, throws a new one at me), I have acquired quite a few of them, so the task was not so trivial.

Besides, benchmarking is not so easy as it may seem. The best way to compare two compilers is to port a real-life application of considerable size and complexity from one language to another. Of course, nobody would do this just for the sake of comparison, so some degree of artificiality can not be avoided.

Not too happy with the traditional Sieve of Erasthenes, I decided to write a three-stage benchmarking program, consisting of the following parts:

1. **SORT:** A sort of 10,000 integers (or long integers) using the Shell algorithm. This is a small routine with multiple loops, jumping out of them, value comparisons and swaps, quite portable between languages and good for evaluation of the code efficiency. (The pseudorandom algorithm to generate the data should also be portable because the sorting time may depend on the initial sequence).

2. FLOAT: A typical floating-point algorithm: a series expansion of a function. Here I have chosen the sum of $1/(i+1) - 1/(x+i)$ with x being a constant parameter and i running from 0 to 10000.

3. FLIBS: A check of higher-level floating point libraries: compute first $s = 2 * \sin(x/2) * \cos(x/2)$ and $c = \cos(x)$, and then $\text{abs}(1 - s*s - c*c)$ (which should yield 0 if everything works), repeating the procedure 1,800 times for x equally spaced between 0 and π . The sum of absolute values is also a good indicator of the precision of floating point libraries.

If a language implementation had both long and short data types, the benchmarks were run for both varieties.

Table 1. Comparison of benchmark times (in seconds).
See the text for explanations and remarks.

Language Implementation	Ver.	SORT		FLOAT		FLIBS	
		short	long	short	long	short	long
GST C	1.02	-	20.8	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Laser C	1.1	13.4	15.8	(2)	12.1	(2)	24.1
Mark Williams C	3.06	13.5	15.8	(2)	16.9	(2)	36.1
Megamax C	1.1	-	16.1	(2)	36.3	(2)	219.7
Prospero C	1.11	11.0	13.7	(2)	14.9	(2)	33.1
OSS Pascal	2.02	11.3	-	17.4(3)		23.5(3)	
Prospero Pascal	2.13	9.4	11.0	6.4	12.3	11.5	32.5
TDI Modula-2	3.01	14.6	-	7.1	17.6	10.4	33.1
AC/FORTRAN	2.2	15.1	16.2	7.3	14.8	9.6	28.2
Prospero FORTRAN	2.11	14.7	16.0	6.4	14.9	11.5	32.5
GFA BASIC(4)	2.02	314.4	-	10.8(4)		9.1(4)	
-"- (compiled)	1.8	57.4	-	5.3(4)		6.4(4)	
GFA BASIC	3.04	(5)	244.1	7.2(6)		9.4(6)	
True BASIC(7)	2.0	-	220.6	14.0(8)		25.3(8)	

The Moment of Truth: Results

Table 1 presents the results. They confirm the statement I made at the beginning: it is quite difficult to come up with something much better or much worse than the average.

Also, note a worthy newcomer to the ranks of C compilers for the Atari ST: *Prospero C* seems to be a very solid, complete and well-documented implementation, the first one to conform *fully* to the new (draft) ANSI standard. I hope to present a full review of it in an upcoming issue of Current Notes.

Some extra remarks may be due here (numbers correspond to the numbers in Table 1):

(1) *GST C* does not have floating-point variables (according to the Antic Catalog, you will not need them, unless you are using "very serious math"—a jewel of advertising).

(2) All floating-point operations in C are performed with double precision.

(3) *OSS Pascal* uses 6-byte real variables, yielding about

10 decimal digits of accuracy (as opposed to the "regular" 7, or "double" 16 digits).

(4) *GFA BASIC v.2* also uses 6 bytes for reals, with precision similar to that for *OSS Pascal*.

(5) *GFA BASIC v.3* does its integer operations in 4 bytes, even for short integers.

(6) Real numbers in *GFA BASIC v.3* are stored in 8 bytes, but in a non-standard form, providing 13 digits of precision (as opposed to 16 in the IEEE standard).

(7) There is no improvement in performance for *True BASIC* "bound" (stand-alone) programs. I suspect their "bound" programs consist of a runtime package and the tokenized BASIC code.

(8) In the 8-byte *True BASIC* number format, 6 bytes are used to store real values, with about 10-digit precision.

As we can see, the SORT test, demonstrating the efficiency of the generated code gives quite similar results for all compilers involved (except for the "compiled" *GFA BASIC*, which will be discussed

later). Quite unexpectedly, *Prospero Pascal*, the language I have chosen for my own use for its modularity, extensions and overall solid implementation, leads the bunch here.

The routines to generate the initial sequence of numbers and to sort them are quite small in size, so they could be used to demonstrate the maximum possible gain from declaring the most frequently accessed variables as **register** in the C versions:

We can see a visible, although not dramatic improvement in performance: both languages become practically as fast as *Prospero Pascal* (*Prospero C* does its own register allocation, and ignores the **register** specifier).

Let us stress here: in larger routines the gain in speed will be, presumably, less visible: in SORT I was able to use register storage class for the three innermost loop indices and for the swap variable: this is as close to optimum conditions as possible. On the other hand, if the register assignment is done (smartly) by the compiler itself, it can be changed in a middle of a

procedure, with an obvious advantage. I suspect this is what is being done in Prospero Pascal.

Table 2. C benchmarks with use of register variables.

Compiler	Short SORT	Long SORT
Laser C	10.4	12.0
Mark Williams C	9.8	10.6

The two remaining tests do not reflect the quality of produced code, but rather of the floating point libraries (low and high level) coming with the language implementation. This is especially true in case of the FLIBS test, where most of the time is spent not in the benchmark code itself, but inside the function libraries, which are usually coded in assembly and (in theory at least) thoroughly hand-optimized.

Thus, there is no surprise in the fact, that interpreted BASICs run the FLIBS benchmark as fast as compiled languages. On the other hand, two peculiarities can be easily noticed here:

the Megamax C implementation is very inefficient here (one more reason to upgrade to the Laser C: \$20 for the upgrade is the best deal in town),

the floating point libraries in GFA BASIC (both versions) are *very* fast, even taking into account the smaller precision.

Floating-point Precision

The floating point function libraries may gain some speed at the expense of accuracy, so it may be meaningful to check the latter. The sum of absolute deviations from 0 in the FLIBS benchmark is a good measure of precision. Our results present no surprises here.

For the languages providing double precision, the sum of 1800 absolute error values is shown in the top part of Table III (ranging from the best to the worst). Except for Megamax C, I find these differences rather insignificant. (Another test

brought a very similar pattern, let me spare you the details).

The intermediate-precision implementations give results as one would expect, shown in the bottom part of Table III.

The floating-point speed performance of GFA BASIC v.3 may be worth paying the price of 1-2 digits less of precision (as long as you are comfortable with other aspects of the language).

Other Considerations

All benchmarks can be misleading. For example, if you want to program a game with moving sprites on screen, you may chose a slower language (as, for example, GFA BASIC), which has a built-in high-level command (or library procedure) to do just that. This function is already there, presumably optimized in assembly language, so it should be more efficient than your own code.

Table 3. Comparison of floating-point accuracy from the FLIBS benchmarks.

Full Double Precision	
Prospero Languages (all)	1.7E-13
AC/FORTRAN	2.4E-13
Laser C	3.6E-13
TDI Modula-2	4.3E-13
Mark Williams C	9.7E-13
Megamax C	3.2E-12
Intermediate Precision	
GFA BASIC v.3	1.6E-11
OSS Pascal, True BASIC	1.3E-07
GFA BASIC v.2	7.1E-07

In other words, do not pay too much attention to speed benchmarks (including this one). Pay even less to comparisons of the program size: some language implementations (notably, the Prospero family) may start with a considerable space overhead. This effect will be very visible in small programs and nonexistent (or even reversed) in larger ones.

This initial overhead can be a prohibitive factor if you want to

program memory-resident utilities (including desktop accessories), where every kilobyte of memory may count. On the other hand, for stand-alone programs of considerable size your choice can be entirely different.

Thus, programming *NeoDesk* (at least its memory-resident part) or the *Magic Sac* in assembly may be a good choice. On the other hand, using an assembler to write an application like *Degas Elite* may be just a waste of your time (except for some time-critical operations, usually not more than 5% of the whole code).

Last but not least, let us not forget the speed of the link-compile process itself, and the quality of the user interface you will be working with.

Remember 15-minute compilations in Alcyon C? Really irritating: how many sandwiches can you eat during one programming session? On the other hand, the ultra-fast compilation under Laser C (very impressive, indeed; nothing else comes even close) is an advantage, but not a decisive one: say, Mark Williams and Prospero run considerably slower, but not slow enough to hamper your program development process.

Check what goodies are included in the package. Resource construction program? (You can buy one separately for \$40, anyway). Source level debugger? Library manager? Some people cannot live without a debugger (I can); Prospero and Mark Williams provide very good ones. On the other hand, most programmers can do easily without a librarian (I can't).

What about the user interface? If you are a macho Unix man, good in memorizing cryptic commands as **cc -tp2 -f -VGEM -VSINU prx.c -lm** (as opposed to clicking on option buttons in a GEM dialog), then you may be happy with the Mark Williams environment, otherwise you will look somewhere else. And, first of all: *does it crash?*

(*Laser C* did this to me twice, and I will never know why; usually it behaves nicely).

Finally: the documentation. The best telephone support will not replace a decent user handbook. Visit your dealer and spend half an hour (not less!) browsing through the manuals. Don't get fooled with glossy paper and nice box. Don't take anybody's word, check by yourself. I may consider the GFA BASIC manual the most incomprehensible book ever written, but you may be willing to live with it (anyway, it contains lots of information, if you only can decipher it).

Luckily, this aspect improved a lot in recent years: Prospero, Mark Williams and Laser manual may vary a lot in size and arrangement but they are all very good; there is nothing wrong with OSS, either.

Remember: price is not so important (within reasonable limits, that is). And certainly ignore the sales pitch in advertising and on the package ("The Ultimate Programming Language for the ST," come on!).

Summary

If you want my advice concerning the compiler choice in a capsule form, here it is:

Choose a language you are comfortable with. Make sure, that the implementation is solid. Check whether the language (and its extensions and libraries) will allow you to do things you want to do. Do not worry much about the package price: saving 50 dollars just to spend lots of time working around limitations and bugs in the implementation is not worth it. And do not think much about benchmarks: except for some BASICs, one compiler produces approximately as fast a code as another.

NeoDesk Update

Last month I promised to let you know whether Mr. Dan Wilga from Gribnif Software plans to include the full sort-by-type capability into his

excellent *NeoDesk*. I was able to contact the program author on GEnie: indeed, by the time you are reading this, the newer Version 2.02 sorts by type the way Atari desktop does (i.e. for equal types the name is used). No exchange policy was announced, but I would expect, that for the owners of Version 2.01 a self-addressed mailer and the return of original disk should suffice. If you still have not upgraded from Version 1 (\$18 + original installed disk), do it—the program is worth every penny.

STOS: A Hacker's Delight

A full review of *STOS: The Game Creator* appears elsewhere in this issue. From my own brief look at the program and documentation

(good-looking, detailed and readable!), the thing looks like a **BIG** smash hit!

Really, *STOS* is a conservative dialect of BASIC, with extras. But what extras! Take the old Microsoft BASIC (with all mundane things like log and trig functions included in case you need them), add to it some two hundred graphic, animation and sound commands (many are interrupt-driven), and you can do with *STOS* what you would never do to a chicken. The specs look just incredible (and for this price?).

If a man like yours humbly, an advocate of modular and structured programming (hello, Dave! I'm here!), is willing to forgo his principles and jump straight into this funny lingo—what better recommendation do you need?

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Stalk the Market; \$40. pc-ditto; \$40, Leaderboard, \$9; Personal Pascal 2.02, \$27. Kyle, 918-493-0326.

FOR SALE: Atari 520ST, TOS in ROM, upgraded to 1Mb. 1 SS drive, 1 DS drive. Color monitor. Also included are many books and programs (VIP Professional, Personal Pascal, MI-TERM, 1st Word, Spderman, Crimson Crown, Typesetter Elite, plus some Current Notes issues and disks, some START magazines and disks, and other disks and magazines). Asking \$1,000. Call Steve Cooper, evenings, 301-840-0526.



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Atari to Macintosh Jump

Welcome to the first in a series of monthly columns titled "Magic Sac Tips." I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to all the Current Notes subscribers (and those of you just reading a friends copy). I am an independent software developer of GEM applications for the ST and IBM. I operate a small (destined to be large) company called SofTalents. I am the Co-Founder and current President of a local Atari users group called the "Miami Valley Atari Computer Enthusiasts" (MVACE). MVACE is located in Dayton, Ohio and has been in existence since 1982 with a membership topping over 200 members! The Magic Sac Tips column originated in the MVACE newsletter in February of 88 when the Magic Sac was really starting to take off.

The Tips column has proven to be quite beneficial to the members of this group along with numerous other groups who have reprinted the articles (at least that's what I'm told?). In this column I will try my best to answer the most common questions related to Magic Sac operation. If you have questions that you would like to see answered in this column please send them electronic mail to GENIE address D.HODSON or Compuserve address 76056,110. I must also thank Current Notes for the opportunity to write for this magazine. So much for the big introduction, let's jump right in!

In the simplest of all cases, to get the Magic Sac "up and running" all you have to do is get a disk that contains the Macintosh System and Finder files (in Magic format), then boot your ST with the Magic Sac software (included with the Magic Sac package) then insert your Mac boot disk (disk with System and Finder files) when prompted.

This gets us to the Mac desktop; our Atari ST is now an Apple Macintosh. Say it 3 times slowly, "our Atari ST is now an Apple Macintosh." Your Atari is still an Atari up 'till the point where the Magic Sac software said "Ok, take out the Atari ST startup disk. Please insert the startup (boot) disk." When you were prompted with this, you took out your Magic Sac software disk and inserted your Mac boot disk, then hit return. After a second or two the Macintosh desktop appeared. Just what happened when you inserted that boot disk and hit return? To put it simply, the Mac booted. What do you mean? I mean when you hit return it was exactly like turning on the power to a real Macintosh.

So what does all that software you loaded before entering the Mac mode do? Well, hmm, well it, hmm, I don't know? Well, I know a little (ok Dave stop that laughing). Basically it ties that little box and the ST together to form an Apple Macintosh. The Magic Sac software kicks out the ST operating system (bye bye GEM) and replaces it with the Macintosh operating system. Part of that Macintosh operating system is contained in ROM (remember those chips you inserted?).

Notice, I said PART of the Macintosh operating system is contained in ROM, NOT ALL. Where's the rest of the Mac operating system? It's on disk. What disk? The

Mac boot disk. It contains Finder and System files. Finder and System is the rest of the Mac operating system. This disk is VERY IMPORTANT! If you try to boot the Mac (i.e. hit return at that prompt mentioned earlier) without it, the normal disk icon that is displayed is crossed out, indicating bad disk. You must eject this disk and insert a disk that contains a System Folder with a Finder/System combination.

Finder/System combination? Are you telling me there are different combinations? Yes, there are several. There is Finder, versions 1.0, 1.1g, 4.1, 5.0, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 6.0 and System, versions 1.1, 2.0, 3.2, 4.0, 4.1 and more that I don't know about (and don't care to know about). Why are there so many versions? Apple upgrades. Apple decided when they released the Mac to the general public that the Mac operating system would not remain the same (improvements, bug fixes and so forth). There is nothing new about this, the Atari ST operating system was first released on disk to let users locate bugs in it (how nice), then later put on ROM and installed in the machine. As you can see the Finder file has been updated several more times than the System file. You have to be careful, you cannot go blindly picking out certain Finder versions and putting it together with certain System versions (no-no). Only certain combinations work. The preferred combination is Finder 5.4 with System 3.2.

Now we should have a good feel for when the ST becomes a Mac and understand that the chips we all inserted into that little box are just ROM chips which contain PART of the Macintosh operating system. The rest of the operating system is contained in the Finder and System

files which are loaded when the Mac boots. Here's where a trouble spot occurs. You would think that after the Finder and System files are loaded you're finished. Take out the disk, put in another disk that contains programs, and off you go, right? WRONG! Well you could do it, but you would be swapping disks back in forth all day long just to get a simple program running.

Why? Let's step back a second. WHEN THE MAC BOOTS, ONLY PIECES OF THE FINDER AND SYSTEM ARE LOADED! In other words, the Mac operating system only loads the pieces of Finder and System files that it needs! So later when running a program if it needs another piece, you guessed it, it asks you to reinsert the disk that contains the Finder/System combination. What happens is you end up swapping disks back and forth forever (not really, it just seems like it).

There are a couple ways around this problem. The first is to just put Finder and System on every disk that contains the programs you want to run. Simple enough but, Finder and System take up a lot of room on a disk, and if you decide to run a different Finder/System combination you have to modify each and every disk. This is not a good solution.

Second, if you have two disk drives (hard disk stuff later) just keep your Mac boot disk in drive A: and run all your programs from drive B: (don't worry, the Mac will find the Finder/System files). But this means you waste one drive just to keep the entire Mac operating system available to the computer. It's not a great solution but I must admit I use it sometimes. The third and certainly the best is to simply create a ramdisk and copy all Finder/System files to it. There are no drawbacks to this method (except using up memory). In fact, you have the ramdisk speed advantage.

How do I setup a ramdisk? First of all, what is a ramdisk? My spelling checker says it's not even a word! Here's my definition.

Ramdisk \ram-disc\ noun - a computer program designed to configure the RAM space in a manner such that a portion is used for the storage of files. The computer program must also configure the computer so that the storage and retrieval of these files (in RAM) appear no differently than working with a standard disk drive (or hard disk). Give me a call, Webster!

What this means is, if you set up a ramdisk on the Mac and then copy the Finder and System files to it, the Mac will have access to the

entire Mac operating system all the time! The problem of swapping disks back and forth disappears! How do you do that?

- 1) Get a copy of RamStart 1.3. It is available in several user group libraries and available from Current Notes library (disk M9: Utility Disk No.2).
- 2) Get the Mac up and running.
- 3) Copy RamStart 1.3 program into the System Folder on your Mac boot disk.
- 4) Power down the Magic Sac.
- 5) Reboot your Mac using your "modified" Mac boot disk.
- 6) You now have a fully functional ramdisk with Finder/System files copied into it! (and more space for other programs)

Oops, you had a problem? You could have a problem if RamStart configured a ramdisk too small to copy the Finder and System files to it. Simply change the size when RamStart is running. RamStart copies all the files in the System Folder to the ramdisk.

Well, there you have it, an understanding of where the Mac operating system resides and how to get around the problem of part of an operating system on floppy. Next month we'll discuss how to configure your Magic Sac for printing.

New Spectre CN Library Disks

by Jeff Greenblatt

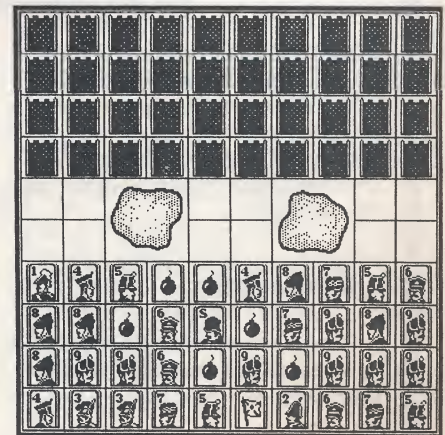
This month, Current Notes is releasing 5 new PD and Shareware Spectre compatible (128K ROMs) library disks. For those of you using the Spectre with 64K ROMs, I recommend the excellent CN Magic library listed elsewhere. If you like and use any of the files, don't forget to make your shareware donation(s) to the author(s). Here is a rundown of what each of the new disks contains:

Disk S7: Games #2, contains 5 new games. They are **Space Bubbles** (a space invader clone with smart bombs), **Stratego** (cap-

ture the flag), **Investigator No. 1** (be a sleuth, solve a crime), **Towers of Hanoi** (the old standard ring game puzzle), and **Marienbad** (a variation of Matches with a Mac opponent).

Disk S8: Image Studio Demo contains a fully functional working demo (prints too) except for saving files. Image Studio puts a photo retouching lab on the desktop. It contains editable brushes that lets you modify digitized images in 65 gray scale levels. A sample file is also included for editing purposes.

Disk S9, Telecom #1, con-

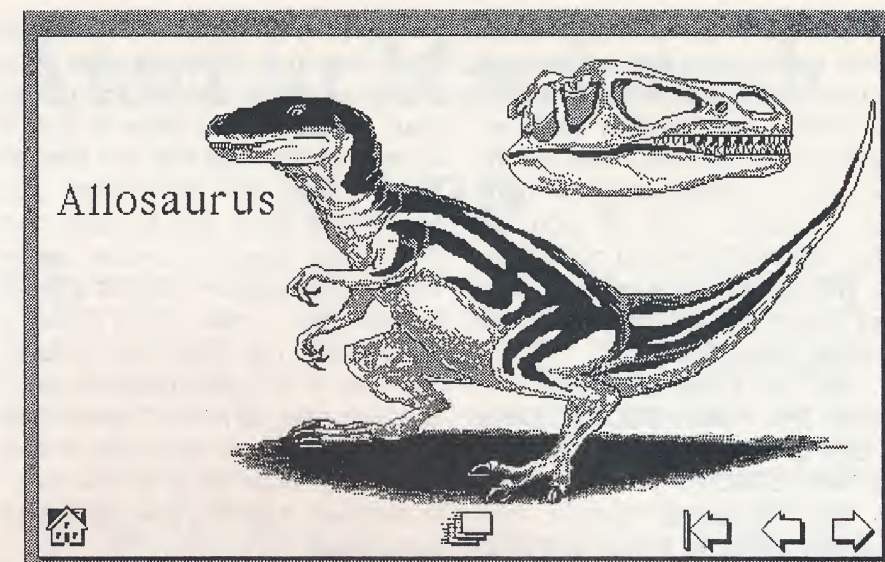


Stratego (#S7:Games #2)

tains everything you need to start using your Spectre for telecommunications. The disk contains Stuffit 1.51, Stuffit 1.51 User's Guide, FreeTerm 2.0, FreeTerm 2.0 Documentation, TermWorks 1.3 and Packet III (version 1.3).

Disk S10D, Stacks #1, is a double-sided disk containing 6 HyperCard stacks. They are Concentration (computer version of the TV game), Dinosaurs (learn about all the dinosaurs—lots of excellent graphics), Hyper-gunshy (a shanghai clone), AutoStack (cars of yesteryear and their history), Home 1.2 (a home card replacement that even runs applications other than stacks, 2 meg ST required) and Read Me First (a doc file stack for Home 1.2).

Disk S11, Utilities #1, contains 10 very useful applications and CDEV/INITs. They are MacEnvy (a CDEV to display your hardware and software environment), Benchmark (compare your Spectre's memory performance to an accelerated Mac), DiskTimer II (compare your Spectre's hard and floppy disk per-



Learn all about Dinosaurs: #S10D - Stacks No. 1

formance to a Plus, SE or Mac II), SampleIt 1.21 (the latest version to test DAs, FKEYs, Fonts, MacDraw and MacPaint files), SampleIt Docs, Apfont 3.2 (a CDEV to change the default font), HierDA (a CDEV to add side bar pop-up menus to your DAs), Fever (test for viruses), OnCue 1.3 Demo (a fully working CDEV to run applications without

returning to the finder), Screen Dump II (install an FKEY to dump the current window to disk as a MacPaint file), and Findswell 2.0 Demo (an INIT to install a new button in the Open Dialog box of most applications to search for any file, no matter how deeply nested in folders).

Introducing

Get more out of your Atari ST!

Spectre 128

The Most Powerful Macintosh™ Emulator Available for the Atari ST™

Written by David Small, the creator of the Magic Sac™

COMPATIBILITY :

- 128K ROM compatible! With the 128K ROMs installed, Spectre can run new Mac software such as HyperCard™, Adobe Illustrator™, and PageMaker™, plus all of the older Mac software.

- Spectre will be compatible with all future Mac software

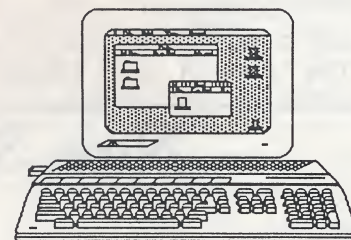
- Directly compatible with Mac's HFS. Spectre will boot compatible format 800K disks.

SPEED :

- Floppy disk write speed is up to 8 times faster ; hard disks can copy a 500K file in 8 seconds

- Screen redraw speed is 400% faster than the Magic Sac

- The screen is 30% larger, and the overall speed of the Spectre is 20% faster than the Mac Plus



Atari ST not included

Suggested Retail Price:

\$ 179.95

Gadgets 
by Small, Inc.

40 W. Littleton Blvd., #210-211
Littleton, Colorado 80120
(303) 791-6098

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Desk Accessories

- M8: DESK ACCESSORIES NO. 1.** (45)
M18: DESK ACCESSORIES NO. 2 (30)
M46: DESK ACCESSORIES NO. 3. (35)

Utility Disks

- M2: TELECOM DISK NO. 1.** BinHex, Free Term, FreeTerm.Doc, Kermit, Packit III, Stuffit, TermWorks.
M3: UTILITIES NO. 1. DES, Font Doubler, MacDump, Mini Finder, Packit III, Reverse Screen, RMOVER, Scan, Set File, SLICER, Ver Reader, Write Stream.
M5: DISK LIBRARIAN.
M9: UTILITIES NO. 2. Bind Icons, Change Appl. Font, Convert Desk Acc., Desk Accessory Mover, File Hacker, FontDoubler, Index, MakeScreen, MicroFinder, PurgeIcons, RamAstart, REdit, ResEd, SelectPaint, Show Version, User Interface Demo.
M11: PRINT UTILITIES. Coventry-12, Disk Labeler, Fast Eddie, Font Mover, Ink, MacWrite 4.5 to Text, miniWriter, MockWrite, Pica-10, ReadMacWrite, Walla Walla-9.
M27: UTILITIES NO. 3. Browse/Shazam!, Clocks: analog & digital, Edit, FEdit, launch, lazyMenu, Magic Beep, Menu Editor, microFinder, Quick Dir, Quick Print, RamStart, Road Atlas, ShrinkToFit, SignEdit, SortMenu, SortMenu Code, SuperFinder4.0, TabsOut, Unpit, WayStation.
M28: RED RYDER 7.0.
M43: UTILITIES NO. 4. DiskDup+, Mac-Snoop, RamDisk+, ResTools, Oasis (HFS), Font Librarian (HFS), Switch.

Games

- M4: GAMES NO. 1.** Backgammon, Bash Big Blue, Curves, MacLuff, MacYahtzee, Maze 3D, Meltdown, Missile Command, Munch, Pepsi-Cas, Smile, Snow, Solitaire, Space Bubbles, Vax Runner II.
M6: GAMES NO. 2. Ashes, Black Box, Destroyer, HexPuzzle, Killer Kalah, MacPoly Demo, Office Attack, Point Symmetry, Snake, Solitaire, Trophy List, Wall Game, Wheel.
M7: GAMES NO. 3. Break the Bricks, Deep Ennui, Go, Mac Gunner, MacBugs, MacCommand, MacYahtzee, Wiz Fire.
M15: GAMES NO. 4. Alice, Amps 3(B2), Bricks, Canfield2, Iago, Lets Get Tanked!, MacHeads, Nim, Space Attack, Third Dim.
M20: GAMES NO. 5. Chase'Em, Crystal Raider, Daleks, Golf MacWay, Kill File, Kill King, King, MacWrite, On-The-Contrary, Stunt-Copter.
M21: GAMES NO. 6. Guess, Hacker's Contest, Hot Air Balloon, Match, Ramm, Third Dim., Trick-Track, Utaan Attack, Zero Gravity.
M25: GAMES NO. 7. Billiards, Cross Master Demo, Flash Cards, Hangman, MacLuff, Master Guess, Safari, Venn.
M30: GAMES NO. 8. Bowl-A-Rama, Mac-Trek, Mystery Box, Shots, Star Trek Trivia Quiz, Window Blaster.
M34: GAMES NO. 9. 1000 Miles, Asteroids, Cairo ShootOut!, Donkey Doo, Duck Hunt, Pente 1.0.
M45: GAMES NO. 10. Blackjack, Gunshy, Humpback, New Social Climber, Panic, Puzzle, Star Trek Trivia Quiz, Video Poker.
M51: GAMES NO. 11. Bouncing Balls, Fire Zone, Mac Word Hunt, Out Flank, Risk and Word Search.
M53: GAMES NO. 12. 3D Checkers, Bills Casino, BMX-The Racing Game, HeloMath, Mouse Craps.
M58: GAMES NO. 13. Klondike, Space Station Pheta, Mac Concentration, Sitting Duck, Hot Air Balloon, Think Ahead.
M60: GAMES NO. 14. Golf Solitaire, Mac Football, Euchre, Gomoku, Pyramid, Checkers,

Runaround and Macpuzzle.

- M19: PINBALL CONSTRUCTION SET GAMES.** PCS Player plus 12 Games.
M29: PCS GAMES NO. 2. PCS Player plus 10 Games.

Adventure Games *

- M17: DUNGEONS OF DOOM 4.0.**
M23: VAMPIRE CASTLE.
M24: DEEP ANGST. 1 Mb ST only.
M31: BLACK WIZARD.
M36: CASTLE OF ERT.
M40: HACK, Ver1.03.
M41: RADICAL CASTLE.
M63D: MOUNTAIN OF MAYHEM.
M65D: DEEP ANGST II.
M66: INTRUDER.

Graphics

- M10: GRAPHICS NO. 1.** Amy, Artisto, ball demo, Big Ben, Brocke, Bugs, Curves, Display Message, Dragon, Fighting 51, Fourth Dimension, GARF, HotSex!, Liar's Club, Living Art, Max Headroom, Moire 3.0, Nightmare, Optical Illusion, Paint Grabber, Painter's Helper #1, Pattern*, Pisces, Rotations, Saddle, The Fourth Docs, ViewPaint 1.5.
M12: MACBILLBOARD. (MacPaint clone).
M22: GRAPHICS NO. 2. BlowUp, BlowUp Notes, CalendarMaker, Dynamo, Graphic, MadMenus, Math21, Rays, Simutree, Spiro, Tree, Vanlandingham.
M26: GRAPHICS NO. 3. 3D Sketch, AniRama, Bin/Graphics, Brownian Motion, Control, Fractal Contours, Fractals, Icon Collector, Julia, MakePaint, Melting Clock, Small View, ShapeArt, StarFlight, Window Demo.
M47: GRAPHICS NO. 4. Cursor Designer, Earthplot, Graphics, Mondrian, MotionMaker, Moving Finger, Wallpaper, Zoomation.
M57: GRAPHICS NO. 5. Micro Film Reader, Bomber, Iliana II, Preview, Super Ruler, and XVT-Draw.

Font Disks **

- M13: FONT DISK NO. 1.** Akashi, AlgBlurb, Algebra, Athens, Boxie, Dover, Geneva, Hood River, ImageWriter, LED, London, Los Angeles, Luxor, Mars, Monaco, Park Ave, Pica, Ravenna, Rome, Runes, San Francisco, Seattle, Steel Brush, Ultra Bodoni.
M14: FONT DISK NO. 2. Bookman, Courier, Coventry, Dali, Geneva, Hebrew, Manteco, Shadow Box, Sri Lanka, Times, Walla Walla, and font display w/docs.
M16: FONT DISK NO. 3. About Lachine, Alice, Avante Garde, Berkeley, Broadway, Camelot, Cartoon, Centura, Chancery, Eon, Exeter, Fallingwater, Fantaste Key, Fantaste!, Future, Ham, Helvetica, Hollywood, Lachine, Lineal, Madrid, Pittsburg, San Quentin, Silicon Valley, Stencil, Unicol plus DAFont2.da and SysFonts.da.
M32: FONT DISK NO. 4. Canberra, Chicago, Humanistic, Music, New Dali, Palencia Application, Palo Alto, Pioneer Shadow plus F/D A sorter and Font Tester.
M35: FONT DISK NO. 5. Beehive, Beverly Hills, Boise, Chicago, Courier, DeStijl, Ham, Happy Canyon, Helvetica, Mod. Chicago, Old English, Square Serif, Sri Lanka, Worksheet.
M42: FONT DISK NO. 6. Berlin, Boston II, Courier, Dorza, Highwood, MicroBoston, Mini-Boston, New York, Palo Alto, Sparta, Stiletto, Symbol, Tatooine, Venice, Wartburg.
M44: FONT DISK NO. 7. 42nd Street, Aldous, Art Deco, Ascii, Blockbuster, Border, Clairvaux, Coptic, Deep Box, Ivy League, Klingon, Las Vegas, Little Box, Madrid, Memphis, Minneapolis, Rivendell, Spokane.
M50: FONT DISK NO. 8. Alderney, Cairo, Cyrillic, Greek, Paint, Playbill, Rehovot, Runes, Washington, Zodiac.

- M61: FONT DISK NO. 9.** New Century, Helvetica, Columbia, Minneapolis, Creamy, Palatino, Detroit, and Zap Chancery.
M64: FONT DISK NO. 10. York, Paint, Miscpix, Icon, Cupertino, Arabic, Fallingwater, Schematic, Moscow, and Isengard.
M67: Font Disk No. 11. Cavanaugh, Icon2, Fletcher, Math-Greek, Toyland, Troyes, Memphis, Provo, Scan, Tombstone, Southbend, Klingon, Wall Street.

Clip Art

- M33: CLIP ART NO. 1.** 12 clip art screens plus ViewPaint 1.5.
M52: CLIP ART NO. 2. 27 clip art screens.
M55: CLIP ART NO. 3. 26 clip art screens.

Commercial Demos

- M37: MAC-A-MUG PRO DEMO.**
M38: VIDEO WORKS PLAYER NO. 1. PD player + 11 movies.
M39: DEMO DISK NO. 2. Anatomiser, Desk-Paint, and SuperPaint.
M54: DESIGN. Includes 5 samples and full documentation.
M59D: DEMO DISK NO. 3. Kaleidagraph and Geographics II. Double-sided disk.
M62: DEMO DISK NO. 4. Math Blaster and Blob Manager Demo.

Hypercard Disks

- M48D: HYPERSTACKS NO. 1.**
M49D: HYPERSTACKS NO. 2. NOTE: M48 and M49 require HyperDA and some form of DA tester--Sample It! (M46) or DA Tester 1.5 (M8 or M18).
M56D: HYPERSTACKS NO. 3. Atkinson's

* DO NOT work with Spectre
 ** DO work with Spectre

Spectre 128 PD Library

- S1: MacWrite 5.0 Demo**
S2: MacPaint 2.0 demo
S3D: Red Ryder 9.4 (DS disk)
S4D: Aldus Freehand Demo (DS)
S5: Games #1: Banzai, Monopoly 4.0, ATC 4.0, Mines, New Daleks, Brickles 4.0.
S6D: PowerPoint Demo.
S7: Games #2: Space Bubbles, Stratego, Investigator #1, Towers of Hanoi, Marienbad.
S8: Image Studio Demo.
S9: Telecom #1: Stuffit 1.51, FreeTerm 2.0, TermWorks 1.3, and Packet III.
S10D: Stacks #1. Concentration, Dinosaurs, Hyper-gunshy, AutoStack, Home 1.2 (double-sided)
S11: Utilities #1: MacEnvy, Benchmark, DiskTimer II, SampleIt 1.21, Apfont 3.2, HierDA, Fever, OnCue 1.3 Demo, Screen Dump II, Findswell 2.0 Demo.

NOTE: These disks require Spectre 128 and do not work with the Magic Sac..

Ordering information on page 40.

CURRENT NOTES ST LIBRARY

NOVEMBER 1988

- #277D: GNU C Compiler.**
#280: Lambert Pics No. 4. 18 Degas Elite pictures.
#281: Manual Maker. Use GDOS and GDOS fonts to produce attractive manuals.
#282: Damonoid. (C) Arcade game. NO MEGA.
#283: Adventure Games. System 5, Once A King, El Bozo's City Out of Bounds.
#284: Desk Acc No.3. Mouse doubler, mouse editor, address book, Double-click software's Clock, Formatter, Stuffer.
#285D: Star Trek (AVS).
#286D: California Raisins (AVS).
#287D: Miami Vice (AVS).
#288, #289, #290, #291: GNU C Source Code: Four disk set includes Make and Other Utilities, Assembler, Compiler, header files, DIFF source and a collection of documentation.

DECEMBER 1988

- #292: Lambert Pics No. 5.** Spectrum: 2kittens, blackbird, chipmunk, fox, owl; Degas Elite: drag108, dragcol, dragcovl, dragon2.
#293: Dungeon Master Maps..

- Maps and a cut'n'paste spell chart to aid you in your quest in Dungeon Master.
#294: Kid Games No. 3 (C). Kid Publish and Kid Shapes.
#295 Sticker (C/M). German disk labeling program with graphic images.
#296: Stacatto. Musical quiz game. Just listen or try and guess the song names as quickly as possible.
#297: Amaze. Maze Construction Set. Draw an image boundary and then solve on screen or print out your maze.
#298: C-Source Disk No. 9. The source code to ST Xformer V1 and V2. (The Atari XE Basic emulator).
#299: Pascal Disk No. 5. Disk labeling program and referencing pixels on the screen.

JAN/FEB 1989

- #300: Dual Term.** Telecommunication program by Tony Belding. Text capture or upload, xmodem, automatic dialing AND display of both VT52 and ATASCII graphics.
#301D: LDW Power Demo. Demo of LDW spreadsheet includes folder of VIP/LOTUS/LDW templates. DS disk.
#302: Lambert Pics No.6. (C) 17 Degas Elite pics (3Dship Bogart, F15

F18_3 Frtank Gablec2 Goali Hansolo, House Kingkool Kitty Klingnon Monument Porsche Spidey2 Strohs Sun.

#303: Uniterm, Ver 2.0E. Terminal emulator for the VT102/220 and Tektronix's 4014 terminals. Includes Xmodem and KERMIT protocols. Files ARC'd. [Replaces CN #88]

#304: Electronic Jigsaw Puzzle V1.2. (C) puzzle program for Neo, Degas, and Tiny pictures (color only). Includes 14 pictures that can be divided into 25, 64, or 100 pieces.

#305 & 306: Modula2 Language. 2-disk set contains full working implementation of Modula2 language (note: Manual not included but can be obtained from author.)

#307D: Calamus Demo. (M) Demo version of newest DTP program from Europe. Includes sample documents (some ARC'd). 1Mb, DS disk.

#308D: Runaway Cat. (C) AVS disk with a PD player so you can see animation and hear music at the same time. (Note: player also works with: CN #285, 286, 287.) 1Mb, DS disk.

#309D, #310D, #311D: TEX: Text Document Processor. (M) 3-disk set contains TEX document processing language. Drivers provided for EPSON

GAME BOX #1 (Color). 30+ games: Aggravation, Azarian, Backgammon, Barn Yard, Black Jack, Boggle, Box the Dragon, Checkers, Daleks, Darts, Escape, Hac-Man, Hero!, Jigsaw Puzzle, Jumpster, Kid Music, Kid Notes, Kid Sketch, Kids ABC, Mastermind, Monopoly, Mr. Potato, Poker, Roulette, Scour Four, Sensori, Shanghai Demo, Slots, Stone Deluxe, Triple Yahtzee, Twixt, Wheel of Fortune.

GAME BOX #2 (Monochrome). 30+ games: Adventure, Adventure Writing System, Anduril, Ballerburg, Baseball, Bog, Breakout, Core Wars, Cribbage, Daleks, Diamond Miner, Draw Poker, Eamon Adventure Games, Eliminator, Escape, Hero, Invaders, Krabat & Krabat2, Mazemaker, Mega Maze, Megaroids, Monopool, Ogre, Puzzlepuzzle, Reversi, Runner, Shanghai, Snafu Principle, Space War, Squixx, Stocks and Bonds, Truckster. [Box includes CN #54, 80, 135, 153, 212, 213, 230, 240, 257, 269]

CLIP ART BOX #1. 240 screens of clip art

CURRENT NOTES PD BOXES

plus a variety of clip-art and picture utilities. [Includes CN #158, 159, 160, 239, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250]

NEO/DEGAS PICTURE BOX #1. 185+ examples of Atari Art! Includes Neochrome painting program. [Includes CN #14, 183, 40, 41, 42, 51, 52, 65, 75, 98]

MUSIC BOX #1. 400+ songs for use with Music Studio and 30+ songs for use with Music Construction Set. PD players included. [Includes CN #60, 114, 196, 197, 198, 199, 216, 216, 237, 244]

C LANGUAGE BOX #1. 2 "C" compilers plus 8 disks w/sample "C" programs. [Includes CN #123, 277D, 33, 82, 133, 156, 171, 223, 231, 298]

ST LANGUAGE BOX #1. 8 languages: Forth-83, Forthmacs V1.1, C Compiler, ICON Language, XLISP V2, Toy Prolog, Little Smalltalk, Modula2 and Editor disk. [CN #53, 71, 123, 124, 163, 181, 224, 262, 305, 306]

PASCAL/MODULA2 BOX #1. Sample programs to help you learn these languages. [Pascal: CN #31, 49, 93, 111, 177, 299; Modula2: CN #31, 83, 92, 110, 232]

NEW* SHOW-OFF BOX #1. Balls & Boinks, Oxygen, Shiny Bubbles, Spheres, CN Movie, Steely Boink, ST-Replay, Space Probe, Cyberscape, Play It!, California Raisins, Miami Vice. (CN#78D, 90,105, 128, 129, 134, 151, 173, 218, 286, 287) REQUIRES DS DRIVE.

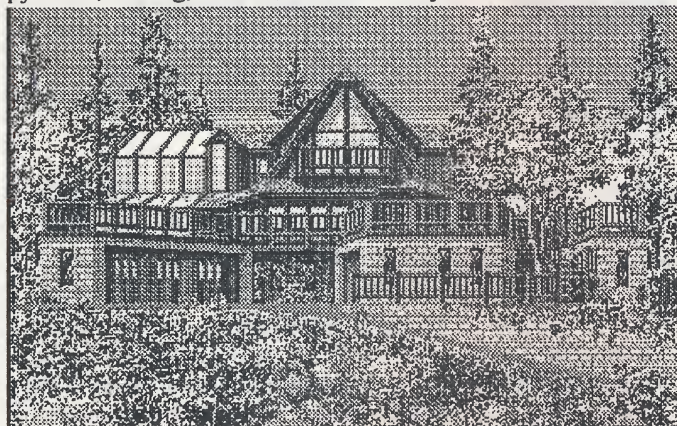


CN PD Boxes include 10 disks and a plastic case to hold your disks. They are \$35 each plus \$2 S&H. Order from CN Library, 122 N. Johnson Rd, Sterling, VA 22170.

CURRENT NOTES ST LIBRARY

NEW--MARCH 1989

#312: NEO/DEGAS CONTEST WINNERS. 21 award-winning pictures: tribar, dragon, midearty, city2042, cougar4, distill, dungeon1, egore2, fighter, forest, gilbert, house (shown below), millyw, nitemoon, panzer, plantfal, pyramid, sailing, shuttle, snowcat, wayne.

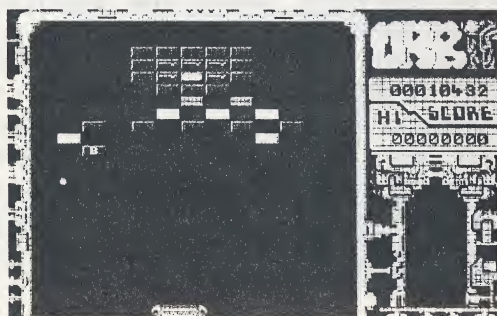


#313: ZOLTAR. (C) Arcade game similar to Galaxian but gives the user the opportunity of defining your own alien ships, their flight patterns and speed. Produced with STOS Basic.



#314: BULLET TRAIN. (C) Arcade game; pilot your train fast enough to avoid pursuing train while watching out for dead-end tracks and box cars blocking your way (that's what the "bullet" is for!). Produced with STOS Basic.

#315: ORBIT. (C) Arcade game similar to Breakout and Arkanoids. Includes wide variety of different "bricks" and

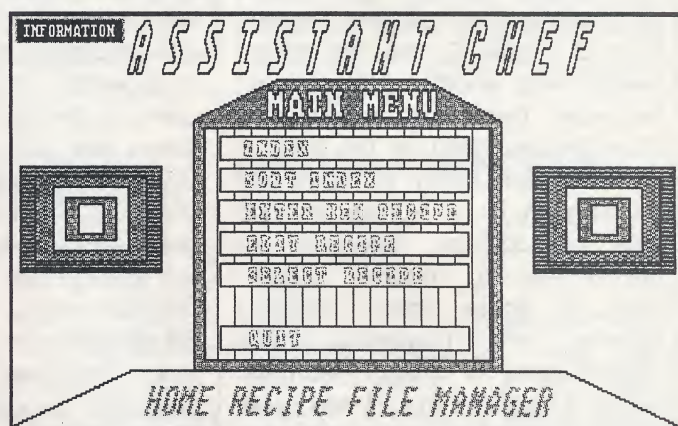


screens. Define and save your own screens. Produced with STOS Basic.

#316: CASINO-KENO. (C) Version 1.0 faithfully simulates keno games in Nevada allowing the player to mark on a keno card up to 15 numbers out of 80. Creates and saves personal account information to disk so play can continue later. By Glenn W. Ulrich.

#317: PROHIBITION. (C) Arcade game where you have to be quick on the draw and accurate as you try and make your way through the ganster infested city streets. By Tsunoo Rhilty.

#318: ASSISTANT CHEF. (C) Just the recipe program you've been looking for. Holds up to 300 recipes (42



included). Sort by recipe number, name, food group, food type, disk type, rating. Add to and edit recipes. View and/or print.

#319: GENERATION GAP DEMO. (C or M) Demo version (10 record limit) of Generation Gap Genealogy program by Flying Pigs Software.

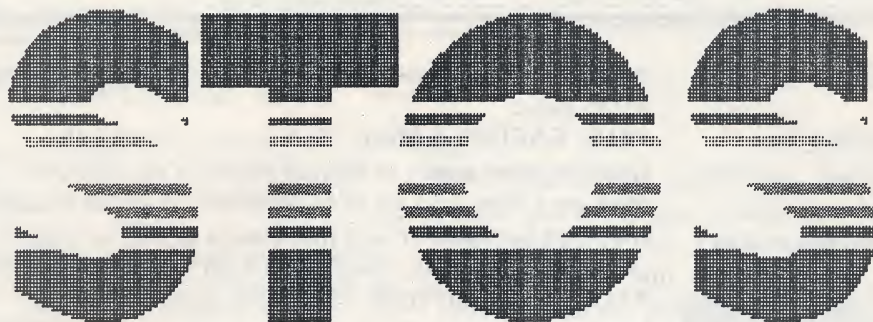
#320: PRINT MASTER NO. 1. Includes Borders6, Borders7, Borders8, and Borders10 for PM and PM+ and a folder of PM_ART icons. Utilities allow conversion of PM to Degas and back as well as PM cataloguer program to view/print an alphabetized catalogue of any PM files.

Ordering Information

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The Game Creator

A Powerful New Programming Language That Makes Game Design Easy

Review by
Steve Marshall
Northwest Phoenix
Atari Connection

I almost didn't buy it. As a programmer who has been working hard to master C, the last thing I needed was another programming language. But I was intrigued by the promises listed on the back of the box—the ability to move and animate up to 15 sprites at once with full collision detection, an interrupt-driven musical soundtrack, a sprite editor, scrolling screens and numerous other effects, many of which I had been unable to achieve in C. I had never heard of *STOS* but it was only \$45 so I decided to take a chance. If nothing else, I could have some fun with it until the next swap meet.

New Powerful BASIC

STOS is a powerful Basic language developed in France and distributed by Mandarin Software of the United Kingdom. It promises the ability to easily program fast moving arcade games and offers a multitude of powerful commands that facilitate sprite movement, sound and even drop-down menus.

How can an interpreted Basic language offer speed that surpasses that of compiled languages like C and Pascal? For one thing, *STOS Basic* completely bypasses GEM, replacing GEM functions with its own. This allows it to run much faster than any other Basic on the ST. I was reminded of another

ballyhooed Basic called "DBasic" which also bypassed GEM and offered blazing speed. It has since disappeared from the ST scene, primarily because it created programs that were incompatible with GEM. *STOS*, while bypassing GEM within its creation, produces programs that will run from the Desktop and operate like any other ST program. And I doubt that *STOS* will disappear because of one main fact – it has been designed for one purpose, programming graphic arcade games, and it succeeds in that purpose in a spectacular way.

An Amazing Bargain

STOS—*The Game Creator* is an amazing bargain for the money. For your fifty bucks you get three single-sided disks; the Language disk which contains the *STOS Basic* language and its support files, the Accessories disk which contains numerous accessories like the powerful Sprite Editor, Music Editor, Icon Editor, Font Editor, a Map Maker, a Screen Compactor and many more useful utility programs, and the Games disk which contains three complete games written in *STOS Basic* and immediately playable. The quality of the games alone is worth the money spent, but you also get a 283 page spiral-bound reference manual crammed with documentation, tutorials and a full descrip-

tion of each of the 320 Basic commands (many of which contain short example code).

Memory Banks

One key element that sets *STOS Basic* apart from any other language for the ST is its use of memory banks. These banks are reserved sections of memory used to store sprite data, pictures, music and other data and can be saved to disk as part of your program. This means that your entire Basic program can reside on disk as one file, including all your sprites, picture screens, music data and any other data included in a memory bank. (This is a great advantage when you're trying to remember what files go with which program when copying disks.) There are 15 memory banks available with sprites always stored in memory bank 1, music data stored in bank 3 and menu data stored in bank 15. Other banks can hold a variety of data including *Degas* and *Neochrome* picture files.

Using the Vertical Blank

The other major design element of *STOS Basic* is its ability to manipulate sprites and play music during vertical blank interrupts. Sprite movements, once set in motion by the program, are updated automatically every 60th of a

second and run independently of the program. This means that your program can spend its time updating scores, checking for collisions or doing almost anything else without worrying about moving sprites. It's a strange sight to BREAK out of a program and still have your sprites moving about the screen while you are typing!

STOS is Fast!

What this also means is SPEED!! I conducted a quick test soon after I bought *STOS Basic* to check its speed. I wrote a little program in *Laser C* that moved a 16x16 sprite across the screen in 1 pixel increments. It took approximately 16 seconds for the little guy to travel 300 pixels. I performed the same test with *STOS Basic* and was amazed to time it in approximately 6 seconds! More importantly, I conducted a similar test moving 4 sprites at the same time. This time it took *Laser C* 21 seconds to cross the screen. *STOS Basic* did it in 6 seconds again! In fact, I got all 15 sprites moving across the screen and detected only a slight loss in speed. Just as importantly, moving a sprite in larger pixel jumps (4-6 pixels) was performed just as smoothly as the 1 pixel increments.

Animation with STOS

Animating sprites is simplicity itself utilizing the Sprite Editor accessory that is included with *STOS Basic*. Simply draw your series of sprites using the Editor's built-in drawing tools, then use the animation feature to select the sequence of sprites in the animation. You can watch the animation play and make changes to the sprites until the animation is just right. You can rotate a sprite, enlarge or reduce, flip or invert it. When you're satisfied, you can

save them to disk or insert them directly into your program's sprite bank for immediate use. You can also grab sprites from a Neochrome or DEGAS picture file. According to the manual, you can also grab sprites from other programs including commercial games but I wasn't able to verify this.

Once you have your sprites defined, all it takes to set them in motion is to define the starting point on the screen and specify the movement. The following example illustrates what is required to move a sprite back and forth across the screen in a continuous loop:

```
10 sprite 1,0,100,3
20 move x 1, "(1,2,150)(1,-2,150)L"
30 move on
```

Line 10 defines sprite #1 as using image number 3 from the sprite bank and places it at 0,100 (x,y coordinates) on the screen. Line 20 defines the sprite's movement as proceeding 300 pixels (in 2 pixel increments) to the right then reversing direction and returning 300 pixels back to the starting position. The "L" indicates that the movement should continue indefinitely, or until you turn the sprite movement off with the "move off" command. If you have

defined an animation sequence in the Sprite Editor using sprite images 3-6, you can animate the moving sprite by adding the following line:

```
15 anim 1, "(3,5)(4,5)(5,5)(6,5)L"
```

```
16 anim on
```

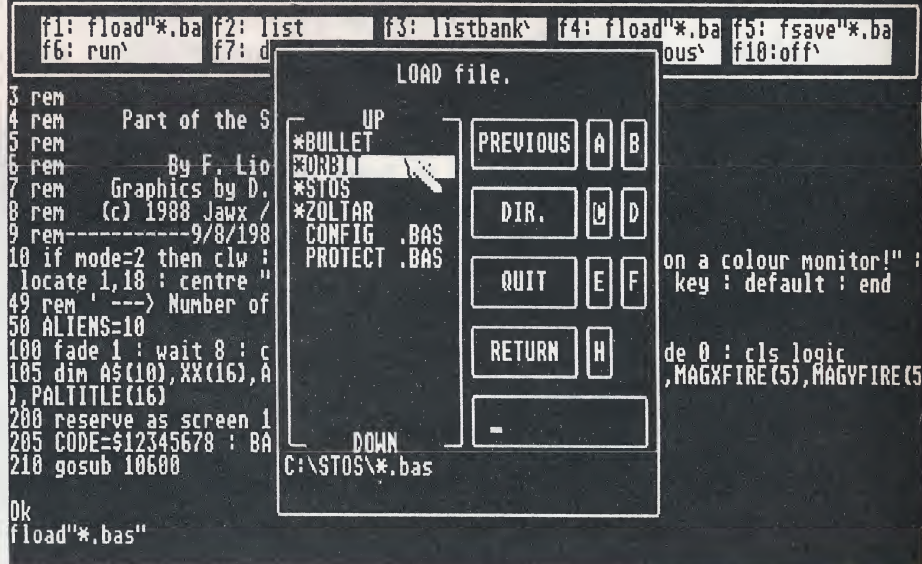
This will change the sprite to the consecutive images at the speed specified by the second parameter (in this case, 5).

That's all there is to it. It does take a little while to get the hang of controlling sprites during a program when they operate independently of loops, but it is certainly worth it in terms of speed and programming effort.

Music and Sound Effects

Music and sound effects can be produced with the Music Editor, also provided with *STOS Basic* (didn't I tell you this program was a bargain!). There are three sound effects "built-in" to *STOS Basic*: SHOOT, a gunshot sound; BOOM, an explosion sound; and BELL, a bell tone.

Like the sprites, music is interrupt driven, meaning that you can easily create background music for your games without sacrificing speed. The Music Editor supports three voices, and builds music



through "scripts" that you develop through the editor. You can edit the envelope to produce either musical notes or sound effects like explosions, engine noises, sirens, etc. Like the Sprite Editor, music can be saved to disk or inserted directly into the music bank for immediate use by your program. And, like the Sprite Editor, you can move between your program listing and the Music Editor just by pressing a function key.

Full-Featured Basic

As for the actual language, *STOS* appears to be a full-featured Basic with good support of strings, arrays, math functions (including double precision), I/O including both random and sequential files, and most of the other features you'd expect from a good Basic programming environment. To make programming easier, *STOS* offers auto line numbering, renumber and the ability to switch effortlessly between low and medium resolution (using a color monitor). This means you can write your program in medium resolution (80 column) and test your program running in low resolution simply by typing the command "mode 0" (for low res) or "mode 1" (for medium res).

STOS Menus

You would think that since *STOS* bypasses GEM that you have to give up drop-down menus, dialog boxes and all of the other mouse-controlled goodies we've come to love. Well, surprise. *STOS* provides its own version of menus that are far simpler to implement and yet provide all of the functionality of the familiar GEM menus. The following example shows how easy menu creation can be:

```
10 menu$(1)="ACTION"
20 menu$(2)="MOUSE"
```

```
30 menu$(1,1)="Quit"
40 menu$(2,1)="Arrow"
50 menu$(2,2)="Hand"
60 menu$(2,3)="Clock"
70 menu on border,mode
```

"Menu on" turns on the menu and allows you to specify one of 16 possible border styles and either drop-down menus (mode 1) or pull-down menus (mode 2). Using MNBAR and MNSELECT, you can read the item selected by the user and branch to the appropriate code.

In addition, a built-in file selector menu can be called with FLOAD or FSAVE.

Specialized Game Features

Since it is geared to writing games, most of the examples in the manual refer to a particular function's usefulness in game programming (using the instr\$ function for text parsing in adventure games, for example). I could go on and tell you about the 78 different screen dissolves, the variety of fades, the joystick and mouse reading routines, collision detection, and powerful screen functions like built-in scrolling, zoom and reduce, screen compression commands and much more, but I don't think Current Notes has room for a ten page review. Take my word for it—if you have any desire to program games, educational programs or graphic demos and are looking for a powerful yet easy to use language, I don't think you can do better than *STOS*. It is just that good! And from hints dropped in the manual, it appears many enhancements are planned for the future (including 3-D graphics support).

Another unique feature of *STOS Basic* is its full support of monochrome (high resolution). This benefit is probably of more importance to Europeans where the monochrome monitor is far

more popular, but it makes *STOS* that much more powerful. All of the accessories work, and a separate monochrome sprite editor is provided.

Technical Support

A major problem I found with *STOS—The Game Creator* was the lack of any state-side support. Any calls or correspondence had to go to the offices of Mandarin Software in England which meant I was pretty much on my own. Although the manual is good and the examples are pretty extensive, there's no substitute for a phone call when you're stuck on a little detail.

Since ANTIC has taken over the marketing of *STOS* in the US, that situation has changed. Although ANTIC will not be answering *STOS* queries over the phone, technical support is available in three ways:

- By mail: write to Antic Technical Support, 544 Second St, San Francisco, CA 94107. Your questions will be answered by return mail.
- On CompuServe: send EMail to Antic Customer Support (76703,2000). Questions answered by return EMail.
- On GENIE: send GE Mail to ANTIC or post a message in the STOS area (Category 3, Topic 72). You may even find that your question has already been asked and answered, so check this area, even if you don't have a specific question.

Run-time Version

I was initially unable to generate a successful run-time version of a *STOS Basic* program. The documentation states very clearly the procedure to produce a copy of an *STOS Basic* program that can be freely distributed and run from the desktop as a .PRG program. I tried unsuccessfully to

produce runtime versions of two simple programs that I wrote, and also tried (again unsuccessfully) to generate run-time versions of the three included games. I assumed it was a bug and not my own inability to follow directions. Thanks, however, to fellow club member Don Harrington (who also bought *STOS Basic*) I can now report success in this critical area. Don experimented with the run-time process and found that it does work, but not as stated in the manual. Don suggested that I copy the STOS directory from the master disk using GEM, and also copy the BASIC.BAS program. When I saved my program as a .PRG file, it worked.

To distribute a finished game written in *STOS Basic*, you must also run a program called PROTECT.BAS. This removes or scrambles the keywords in STOS and renders the Basic Editor unusable, while leaving your game unaffected. Your finished game disk must include the STOS folder (which takes up some 140K of disk space) as well as both the .BAS and .PRG versions of your program. Unfortunately, it doesn't take too much effort to fill up a single-sided disk.

Try Out Some STOS Games

I successfully converted the three games supplied with *STOS* into stand-alone run-time versions. ANTIC has given permission to add

these games to the Current Notes ST Library and they are being introduced this month (Zoltair, Orbit, and Bullet Train). A unique feature of the games is that they allow you to edit, define, and save your own game screens. These are excellent examples of the enormous capabilities inherent in the *STOS* language.

A minor complaint, however, is that the games are not well commented. Particularly frustrating to me is that it appears obvious that the author is making use of advanced programming techniques yet it is very difficult to follow his code. Further complicating the issue are what I suspect are variable names in French! Oh well, c'est la vie!

The STOS disks are not copy-protected and you are encouraged to make backups immediately. I installed *STOS Basic* on my hard drive (Atari SH204) but ran into problems with the Sprite Editor not working properly. I have since put everything onto a double-sided disk and am running off of floppies until I can get some time to experiment with this problem.

Summary

While there are some minor bugs in *STOS*, overall I consider *STOS-The Game Creator* to be an excellent game development system for the beginner and intermediate programmer. With its abil-

ity to produce run-time programs that can be freely distributed, I foresee STOS becoming a popular game programming language

for public domain hackers. Professional results can be obtained with very little effort. It remains to be seen if *STOS Basic* can gain the kind of wide acceptance that GFA Basic has already achieved. But I look forward to the great public domain games that will undoubtedly begin appearing once our creative ST programmers get their hands on *STOS*.

[STOS, marketed by Terrific Software, a division of Antic Software,

The STOS GameMaker Contest

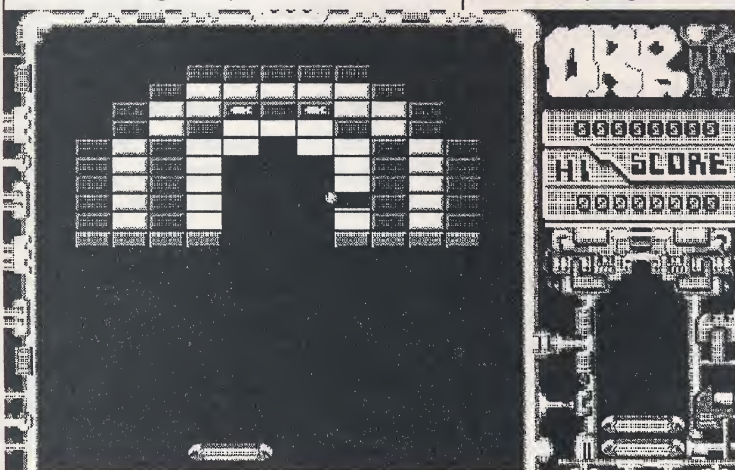
Are you ready for fame and fortune? If you have ever yearned to design your own original game and perhaps dreamed of having it published, here's your chance! The STOS GameMaker contest is open to all registered owners of STOS. Winners have the chance to have their games published by Antic Software. Here are the rules:

1. You must be a registered owner of STOS. This means that you must have sent in your warranty card to Antic.
2. Your game must be written in STOS Basic.
3. The contest runs from Feb. 1, 1989 to July 1, 1989. Entries received after July 1 will not be eligible.
4. The games will be judged on the following merits:
 - a. Originality--it's hard to be original, but it really counts. Try to come up with a game concept that hasn't been done many times over.
 - b. How well you use the special features of SATOS (music, sprites, etc.) STOS has capabilities not found elsewhere, clever use of these will weigh heavily in your favor.
 - c. Graphics. This is last because a winning game can have the graphics spruced up rather easily. So we will look at the graphics, but don't be discouraged if you are not an artist (most of us are not artists either).
5. The game must run on a 520ST with color monitor and no more than 3 disks. This is important so that more people can try your game if you win.

The copyright for the winning game will belong to Antic Software who will market the software. A royalty of 15% will be paid for every copy sold, and royalties will also be paid if the game is licensed abroad and/or converted to other formats.

Each disk should be submitted with your name and address, instructions for loading and playing the game. Disks will be returned if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Send your entries to: STOS Game Contest, Antic Software, 544 Second St., San Francisco, CA 94107.



SPITFIRE 40

Flying By The Seat Of Your Pants

Review by Roger Abram

Cracked, Oh, Cracked. The handle on my joystick is now tightly bandaged with electrical tape. It cracked last week under the pressure of trying to pull my Spitfire out of a dive which was made in an attempt to evade the pursuit of a German Stuka bomber. My plane survived, but now my joystick creaks along.

Spitfire 40 may not have the glamor and sophistication of *Jet* or the newly released *Falcon*, but what it lacks in complexity and graphics is amply made up for by the sheer thrill of aerial dogfighting that it simulates. No Heads-Up-Displays or missiles here, the object is pure and simple: jockey your plane into close proximity of the enemy and then fire your machine guns and hope for the best. If all goes well, you'll see the enemy plane explode and then careen to the earth.

Although *Spitfire 40* is distributed by The Avalon Hill Game Company, it was created by Mirrorsoft, Ltd., the same folks that brought us *High Roller*, a formidable program which involved establishing ground sites to be able to reach enemy headquarters 500 miles away. In *Spitfire 40* they have kept the scenario simple — rumble down the runway until you've gained enough speed, pull up on the stick, and then intercept the enemy. It usually is just a matter of minutes until the enemy is engaged. Once the intruding plane(s) are destroyed, return to the base.

During battle, there are several screens to observe. The first, of course, is the cockpit window. It's here where you can visually sight the enemy either ahead or behind

you (via a rear view mirror), monitor the earth below, and use the gun-sight when mounting the attack.

All of the Spitfire's instruments are located below the cockpit window and can be viewed by tapping on the spacebar. The instruments include an air speed indicator, artificial horizon, vertical speed indicator, tachometer, turn and bank indicator, gyro, altimeter, elevator indicator, fuel supply, rudder indicator, and indicators for the landing gear, brakes, and flaps.

Better Than Radar. Also a keystroke away is a map of southern England. The map shows cities, towns, runways and, most importantly, the position of your Spitfire and any enemy planes. During the heat of battle when you're leaning hard to your right in your seat to help nudge your plane through a difficult maneuver, it's helpful to toggle on the map to find out where the enemy went.

There are actually two modes of play in *Spitfire 40*. The first is the simulation mode where you're given orders to intercept the enemy. The mission begins and ends on the runway of the base. The second mode is played purely for the fun of dogfighting. After selecting this option, you immediately begin in the air with an enemy aircraft directly ahead of you. After blasting it away, check the map...another plane should be approaching. This continues until you've either lost your three "lives" or you've run out of fuel or ammunition. At the end, the number of hits you achieved is saved to disk.

The simulation mode also saves the results of the various missions in the form of a flight log. You're able to enter text onto a page in the log to describe your successes and failures. The animation here is impressive as you control a hand which flips through the pages of the book. As the number of hours flown increase and you continue to triumph, landing the plane becomes more difficult and the enemy pilots become more proficient.

The graphics in the program are acceptable but not great. There are buildings, farms, churches, and other structures which can only be appreciated if you're right on top of them. Since you're out for blood and not on a Sunday Drive, it's best to toggle off all non-essential scenery to improve the screen draw time.

Dogfights! Wow! Where *Spitfire 40* really shines is in its ability to completely immerse you in the dogfights. The German planes are no easy targets and they scramble to get on your tail in each encounter. Even trying to fly the plane in a straight and level flight does not come easy as you are forced to keep fighting the stick to control your aircraft.

The program comes with a thin, albeit complete, manual. A leaflet is inserted with specific instructions for the ST. The manual describes the essential elements of flying the Spit and has one page dedicated to the principles of aerodynamics and another on the historical background of the Spitfire. As you read the history and climb into the cockpit, you'll no doubt feel like one of the young inexperienced pilots who was rushed into combat with less than 12 hours of training for the Battle of Britain.

[The Avalon Hill Game Co, 4517 Harford Rd, Baltimore, MD 21214. Color monitor and joystick required.]

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"Wacht am Potomac"....

New Publishing Powerhouse from Germany

Review by Wm. Price



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Desktop Publishing

CALAMUS has arrived in its \$300 Mack truck version, and the \$500 Peterbuilt edition (the Plus) is being polished for subsequent release. This analogy with heavy duty workhorses is appropriate. *CALAMUS* is no Ford or Toyota pick-up—it is serious, long-haul business. The transition to *CALAMUS* from other DTP systems is comparable to moving from a Piper Cub into the cockpit of a Boeing 747—the instrument panel is overwhelming! *CALAMUS* offers extensive features, and with them come a wide range and diversity of menus and icons. This is not a walk-up, sit-down, use-now system. The documentation must be studied and the host of features must be experimentally exercised to get a better feel and understanding of how the system works and its capabilities. And if you are not accustomed to European road signs and their graphic connotations, *CALAMUS* will furnish an in-depth education on iconography.

Calamus is a plant, its botanical name is *Acorus calamus*, that also grows in this country and is referred to as sweet flag or sweetroot. A tall slender reed, with sword-shaped leaves, the young plants were popular as quill pens. It is repre-

sented in the logo in place of the lower case "l". The term calamus or Kalmus is an antiquated usage that predates the Gutenberg press. The name, however, is appropriate.

Multi-Menus and Modes

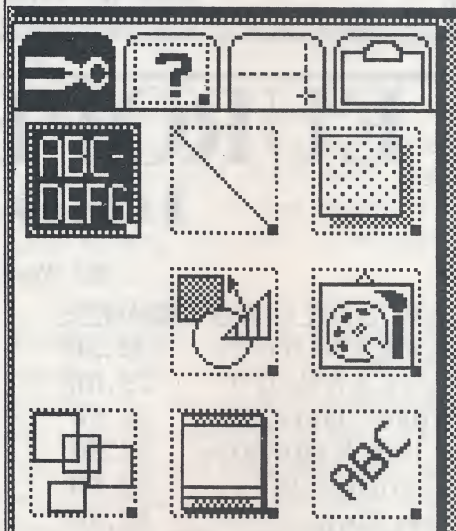
CALAMUS uses three types of menus to activate its multiplicity of rich features. First is the familiar *GEM* desktop with its drop-down or Venetian blind menus. Beneath the desktop is the "Top Line" icon bar used to select various modes of operation: Page Set-Up, Frames, Text Editing, Lines (Vector Graphics), and Raster Graphics.



Under the "Top Line" and occupying the left side of the screen is a box containing a variety of icons. Referred to as the "Menu Box" this display changes to present iconned functions corresponding to modes selected in the "Top Line" and subordinate modes in a "Submenu Bar" that heads the box. The "Submenu Bar" is a strip of four icons that changes to provide features related to the "Top Line" mode of operation selected. The

five modes in the "Top Line" produce a total of 24 different icons in the "Submenu Bar."

Pay attention to the "Submenu Bar" icons for Text functions—initially they can be deceptive. These four icons are actually divided in halves to produce eight different functions. Depending on mode, the master "Menu Box" itself can contain as many as 18 icons for a "Top Line" mode and a related "Submenu" mode. Does this sound confusing? All the discrete functions provided by the different modes have not been methodically counted, but a safe estimate would be in excess of 200.



CALAMUS is Teutonic in its structure, precision, and ability to address the smallest of detail in page layout, typography, and graphics. Its feature richness is unmatched by other desktop publishing systems including Timeworks *Desktop Publisher*, Soft Logik's *PageStream*, *Fleet Street Publisher*, *PageMaker*, *Ready, Set, Go!*, Quark *X-Press*, *Ventura Publisher*, and

perhaps even *Interleaf*. It more closely matches features of the expensive and more recent version of Xerox *STAR*.

Frame Content Diversity

Like other systems, all work must be performed within frame layouts created for a publication. *CALAMUS* provides separate layouts for text, header/footer, index, raster graphic, vector line graphic and rotated text frames. Although complicated in appearance, the manual stipulates that this segmented approach offers significant advantages through independent manipulation for each type of content. Changes in one mode do not alter or disturb the others. This eliminates the need to unsnarl modifications produced by unwanted interdependence. And while we are dealing with raster (bit mapped) and vector (line drawn) graphics, *CALAMUS* will flow text around these frames at the boundary distance specified. It cannot flow around irregular shapes.

Import/Export Capabilities

Unless otherwise qualified, the capabilities of *CALAMUS* begin with those found in other desktop publishing systems and proceed onward from there. Although limited in this version, *CALAMUS* text importing only addresses *1st Word* and ASCII files. Carriage returns in ASCII files can be ignored, and empty lines will create a paragraph break. Normal, Italic, Bold, and Bold Italic styles from *1st Word* can be preserved and also assigned a typographic style. Text can be exported to a word processing file with basic attributes preserved, or it can be exported as an ASCII text file.

Similar capabilities are available for graphics. Vector graphics from a Metafile, *Easy Draw*, or *GEM Draw*

from IBM PCs can be imported and exported as well as cropped and scaled to fit. Raster Graphics from DEGAS, DEGAS Elite, GEM IMG, and IFF formats can also be imported. The appropriate type of frame must be drawn and selected before importing can be executed.

Text Editing

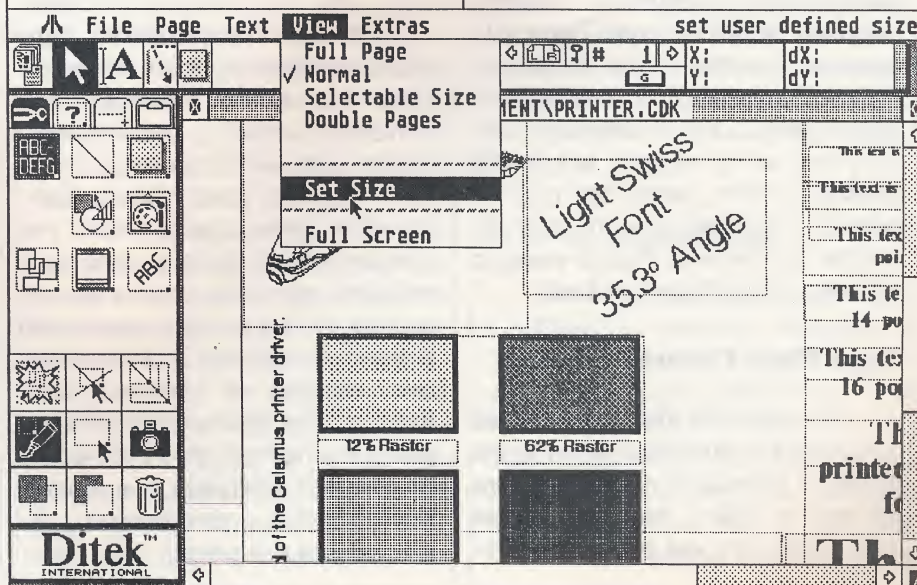
CALAMUS can be used as a word processor to directly enter and edit text. However the approach differs from that used by other publishing systems. Separate Text Editing and WYSIWYG Layout windows are used. The reason for separate windows readily becomes apparent. Although editing can be performed in the Layout window, *CALAMUS* screen refreshes following a change are painfully slow. The Text Editor screen, which overlays the Layout window, displays a standard monospaced font along with imbedded code strings for formats (rulers) and typography. Code display can be turned on or off.

CALAMUS provides the standard search and replace functions. Blocks can be marked for separate manipulation, and editing can be performed in the otype/replace

or insert modes. A welcome feature is the ability to globally search and replace typographic styles encompassing font, point size, underlining, super/subscripts, outline, and shadowed styles. This is a capability found only in style sheets of other systems. But a feature absent from *CALAMUS* as well as other publishing systems is the ability to search and replace a string of text as well as its style. For example, in this article it would be helpful to globally search all occurrences of the name "CALAMUS" and change them from normal to italic for emphasis. This is a frequently needed feature. Lacking this facility, each occurrence must be searched, highlighted, and changed to the style—a slow and laborious process.

Copying and Moving Text

Five clipboards are available for copying or moving text within a document. A move operation removes block marked text from its source while copy leaves it intact. All transfers are made through the clipboards and move or copy are functional in both directions. Partial contents (the upper right corner of text blocks) are displayed in clip-



board boxes to facilitate identification. Graphics can be transferred or copied in the same manner. Always plant the cursor in a frame where the copy is to be inserted. Copy and move can also be used as a replacement function. If a segment of the destination frame is highlighted, the copy will destroy selected information.

Unique Features

CALAMUS has an outlining capability for numbering chapters alphabetically or numerically. A single icon function determines the current chapter number and automatically inserts levels specified at a cursor location in text. A similar function automatically inserts the system date and time. These insertions can be made in the body of a document or in headers and footers. If running heads are used to call attention to beginning and ending page entries (like those in telephone books and dictionaries), selected text can be inserted in these frames. Footnotes can be linked to their number references in text and automatically renumbered if the references are deleted or new ones added.

Powerful reformatting features recalculate variable elements and automatically renumber pages, chapters, and footnotes. Page references to index terms are recalculated if pages are renumbered. Index terms are extracted from selected words in text, but in the present version, terms can only be sorted in chapter order to produce a table of contents. Future versions will allow an alphabetical sort.

Text Flow Control

The precision that characterizes *CALAMUS* is illustrated again in the ability to selectively control the flow of text or piping between frames and pages. In most publishing sys-

tems, this flow is either global or frame by frame. With *CALAMUS*, text flow can be broken at any time. Even if text is deleted or a frame size is altered, continued text can be blocked from flowing backward. A separate feature gives one-shot and one-direction piping for overflow text. This is useful in breaking last from first pages of chapters where the new chapter should begin a fresh right or odd numbered page.

A variety of frame layouts, like those used in newspapers with article continuations, can be designed and saved to disk. Frames from a library of your different page and column formats can be loaded and inserted at any point in a document, even between linked text frames. Furthermore, text can be made to flow through these inserted frames. And recall that inserted frames can go beyond text to include rotated text, vector, and raster graphics. If several page frames must be altered to change the page layout, rather than fuss with them individually, *CALAMUS* will even let you group frames and modify them collectively to retain proportional relationships.

Style and Format Macros

CALAMUS approaches style changes differently than *Ventura* or *Timeworks*, and as a consequence it misses the mark in this important arena. *CALAMUS* operates much like a recorder rather than providing style sheet specifications that can be applied globally when style revisions are made. Styles already applied to text can be captured in a macro by marking a block of text and selecting a "define macro" function. The macro is identified by giving it a name such as "Headline 28 Pt" and assigning it a Control Key/character combination for subsequent execution.

Although this may at first appear cumbersome, it is a powerful feature. A macro can include type face, style, point size, and additionally the horizontal and vertical format information referred to as rulers. Furthermore, the text content of a highlighted string can optionally be included in the macro. This is useful where a statement or notice, such as "SECRET," is to be rubber stamped on pages.

Macro styles are applied by planting the cursor in text and executing the function with a Control Key/character or selecting it with the mouse from a macro table. This list displays descriptive names you have assigned to each macro. Although the table is limited to 22 macros, multiple macro files can be created, saved, and loaded as needed.

Although actual styles and formats are displayed in the WYSIWYG Layout window, as noted earlier they are shown as imbedded code strings in the Text Editor window. Definition and application of macros can be performed in both windows, but functions on the layout screen are restricted. Macros can be modified to reflect changes in style. But when macros are revised, the new style is **not** globally applied to all blocks of text tagged with the macro. This is a disappointment and falls far short of features in style sheets provided by other systems.

Typographic Quality

The first release of *CALAMUS* contains Times and Helvetica fonts in three separate styles: normal, bold, and italic. If this is a benchmark for those to come, the quality will be superb. The Times Roman font supplied is better than any of the *GDOS* fonts and it betters the design of those used by *Page-Stream*. More fonts are being

refined. Although CALAMUS is not copy-protected, the fonts are. When you order additional fonts, they must be installed against your serial number and can only be used with your specific program. CALAMUS fonts are not raster or bit-mapped like those supplied with GDOS. And of course GDOS or other existing fonts cannot be used with CALAMUS.

The developers have wisely chosen to use vector drawn fonts much like the technique used by PostScript. Rather than creating and storing separate bit-mapped alphabets for each point size, vector fonts are scaled from a single set of line, curve, and arc data for each character. Screen and printer fonts can be scaled from 4 points to 300 points, and this scaling can be in fractional sizes that you specify. (Recall that 72 points is one inch in height.)

Although CALAMUS fonts are superior to other ST fonts in design and reproduction quality, they are close but not the equal of PostScript fonts. Font design is not for the computer technician. It's the rightful domain of skilled artisans. And some of the classic fonts have taken well over a year to design, develop and execute. They reflect the work of art, and a hastily made copy of a Rembrandt doesn't take an expert to recognize its deficiencies. Although PostScript fonts are copies, Adobe selected and licensed classics for their library and they are carefully executed to the finest detail. Make no mistake that a variety of quality fonts for the ST will be PostScript. However, CALAMUS fonts are the best competition so far with PageStream coming in as a close contender.

Printer Drivers

The present release provides drivers for the Atari SLM-804 laser, HP Laser Jet, generic Canon laser

engines and compatibles, CITOH 8510, and dot-matrix printers including the Panasonic KXP-4450, Epson FX-80, Star 10X, and Hawk CP-14. The publishing thrust of CALAMUS would seem to dictate that additional drivers will concentrate on high quality laser printers and perhaps a few of the popular 24-pin dot matrix. There is no word on PostScript compatibility. Printer drivers are selectable at print time and give flexibility of choice in output device and resolution. Even the main layout window display can be scaled in size to closely approximate a WYSIWYG representation of the printer resolution. Close examination of font and graphic detail can be made with this feature. For 300 line per inch laser printers, the screen should be set to 375 percent size.

Contrast this driver selectivity with the approach used by Timeworks Desktop Publisher. It freezes the choice to a single driver selected during system installation. In this installation process, font width calculations are made for the specified printer and monitor, and these parameters are frozen. The cumbersome way around this limitation is to run separate installations for different printers and select from among them on boot-up. CALAMUS gives flexibility in selection of printer devices as well as resolution for production of either draft or final copy. This illustrates one of the advantages of using vector fonts.

The typeset product from an HP Desk Jet, using the Laser Jet driver, is commendable. Aside from the extremely slow speed, the output quality will make you question the need for a laser printer. The Times font is so far superior to the GDOS version provided with Desktop Publisher that it raises the issue of why Timeworks bothered with its anemic rendition. The

CALAMUS version is well executed to provide crisp, smooth quality camera-ready copy.

And More...

CALAMUS has numerous other unique features. Among the look-ahead capabilities are a pair of monitor icons in the "Top Line" menu. You can toggle between the standard ST monochrome monitor and an alternate such as the 19 inch Moniterm Viking. Provision is also made for controlling image scanner input. Scanning can be initiated from within CALAMUS, and raster input ranging from 200 to 400 dots per inch resolution can be imported directly to a raster frame. Although only three bit-mapped scanning devices are currently supported--Panasonic, Silver Reed, and Hawk--further releases will include loadable device handlers.

The list of features could continue for several more pages, but unquestionably CALAMUS has outdistanced the competition on the ST as well as the Macintosh and IBM PC. Its features and capabilities have set a new high water mark in standards. The quantum jump made by CALAMUS is similar to that in the camera world when Minolta introduced its eye-opening Maxxum series. It drove the competition into a frantic catch-up struggle, and users have benefitted enormously. CALAMUS will have the same impact.

Interim Assessment

The acid test of any software is the balance achieved between its powerful features and its ease of use which gives productivity. One side of the scale should not rob the other. Page layout, typography, and production of quality camera-ready copy are not easy tasks to perform. Desktop publishing systems com-

bine a variety of tools to provide the efficiencies that can be realized from digital imaging and computerized manipulation. Desktop publishing software cannot reduce these functions to absolute simplicity. There are limits, but the software design, its structure, and its features and relationships can make the job more efficient than manual processes. A first use impression leaves me with the conclusion that *CALAMUS* has missed this design objective in favor of its wealth of capabilities.

Design and user interface are the keys, and it is often difficult to achieve the proper balance. Feature rich programs introduce complexities. *dBMAN* is a powerful data base system that demands a price—an investment in your time to effectively exploit its rich capabilities. The balance was tipped in the other direction by Timeworks with its *Data Manager ST*. Features are adequate for basic, flat files, and these features will easily meet many of your needs. But *Data Manager* is one of those rare breeds of software that can almost be fully used without reading the documentation.

On the surface, the conclusion might be that feature-rich and complexity in use are linear partners. Although *CALAMUS* supports this conclusion, there is ample evidence to the contrary. *Ready, Set, Go!* (as the carefully chosen name implies) is a premier example. It is loaded with features—some not even available in the highly touted *PageMaker*. Yet it is relatively easy to use. This harmonious balance is struck in the well thought-out design and structure that makes it both powerful and (to use an over-worked phrase) intuitively obvious. To that end, *Ready, Set, Go!* is a delight to use and it is productive.

What about *CALAMUS*? Its features are superior with few exceptions. What is lacking is far out-

weighed by what is provided. However, first impressions on ease of use are not positive. But this impression is based on little over a month's use. And a potential user must recognize that one person's poison can also be the cup of tea for another. As an example, a Macintosh user was absolutely delighted—even astonished—with features he found in *CALAMUS*. So carefully weigh these initial assessments with your experience and perspectives.

The number of modes and functions are overwhelming. Becoming familiar with the meanings of over 100 icons and their locations is time consuming. The combination of submodes with five major modes adds to the puzzle. Menu Box options are not visible until a mode and submode are selected. This leads to mode hopping and groping in search of a needed function. This quest for the right function is most pronounced in the Text mode with its 8 Submenu modes. Recall that each of these 8 submodes presents a different set of functions and companion icons in the Menu Box. After extended use, the mapping of locations may become easier. Initially, this is too much to wrap the mind around.

As for the main layout screen, where typeset text and graphics are presented in WYSIWYG, don't even entertain the thought of editing in this window! For example, each time a Carriage Return is entered to break a line, the screen is blanked with a pop-up notice that text is being formatted. The process is slow, as if hot lead type were being rearranged in a galley frame. Indeed, revisions are supposed to be made in the Editing window! But this cannot match the ease and logic of making changes to the WYSIWYG text. *Ready, Set, Go!* works in the Layout screen, and its screen refreshing is faster

than any other publishing system. It must have a secret that others have not discovered—maybe an entire page cache with pointers.

The *CALAMUS* text editor window is not a winner. The mono spaced line lengths map those of typeset lines in the Layout window. With wide column copy, a typeset line is broken over several lines in the editor. And the beginning of a typeset line always starts a new line. This produces a ragged display that is difficult to follow. Just try to work between marked-up typeset copy and the Editing screen to make revisions. It's as if you are working in two different worlds unless you are accustomed to dealing in the abstract. This violates the very concept and utility of WYSIWYG.

When marking blocks to apply changes, you may quickly realize that your concept of a block and that used by *CALAMUS* are quite different. It takes finesse in breaking default blocks into different blocks. One feature that could have salvaged this situation would have been the ability to highlight a string of text with a mouse and apply the macro style. Be forewarned that highlighted material will now be deleted when the macro is applied. And recall earlier that revisions to macros are not automatically and globally applied to all text previously defined with the macro.

The "look alike" and "feel like" court cases certainly don't favor users. There is a lot to be said for standard approaches in performing functions. *CALAMUS* is unique in most of its approaches. Little of the experience from other systems can be carried over. In fact, previous experience can be destructive. *CALAMUS* has a personality of its own.

A major complaint that applies to both *CALAMUS* and Timeworks *Desktop Publisher* is the lack of automatic scrolling windows. This

deficiency is most pronounced when drawing frames or highlighting selected text in an "actual size" window display. When the mouse cursor reaches the right or bottom boundaries of a window, that's the end. The operation stops there. Using a "size-to-fit" display, where ruler spacing is coarse and work is less precise, is an unacceptable substitute. Other systems have this important scrolling facility.

Calamus does require a **monochrome monitor** and at least 1MB of RAM to function properly.

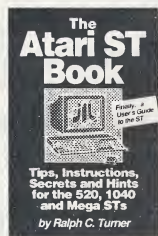
CALAMUS is a castle, a monument to the extremely comprehensive and highly talented technical wizardry of its developers. It is unequalled in the

desktop arena with its precise controls and multiplicity of tools and capabilities. For those that can quickly navigate through *Dungeonmaster* or easily use the controls of *Flight Simulator II*, *CALAMUS* will be a breeze.

ISD, the Canadian marketer, has been superbly responsive to questions on GENIE and to exchanging your disks for update versions. (Current owners may mail their original disk to ISD and an updated version, eliminating the bugs being discovered in the current release, will be mailed to you at no charge.)

ISD Marketing Inc., 2651 John St., Unit 3, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 2W5; Phone: 416-479-1880.

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PageStream Update

Pure, Unadulterated Power, But Slow Printing Speed

By Christopher Anderson

In mid-January, shortly after last month's Current Notes had gone to press, Soft-Logik finally released the long-awaited "fixed" version (1.5) of *PageStream*, its powerful desktop publishing program. In my February review of a slightly earlier in-house version, I wrote that *PageStream* had great potential, but in its current state, the program was seriously plagued by bugs, design errors, and sluggish performance.

Thankfully, *PageStream's* January update represents several major improvements. Most of the features that made the program so eagerly awaited in the first place are now functional and, more often than not, everything they were promised to be. It appears that Soft-Logik has indeed pulled off a remarkable sleight of hand, pulling an impressively endowed page-layout package out of its somewhat tattered hat.

But the program's new-found reliability reveals some potentially more serious flaws. In Soft-Logik's rush to quiet an angry mob of impatient users, it has released a program that works, but at the cost of speed. When a single programmer is assigned to a project that typically consumes years of effort by large teams, corners must be cut. In this case, features took precedence over performance. *PageStream's* languid response and interminable redraws prove that writing in assembly language doesn't guarantee fast code.

What the program does offer, however, is pure, unadulterated power. In several days of experimentation, I was able to mimic almost any publication I could find, from newspapers to glossy magazines. For example, "professional" page layout packages are defined by features like text flow around irregular objects. By that measure, *PageStream* is one of the best, better even than the lauded *PageMaker*. Text automatically conforms to the contours of imported object graphics (like Easy Draw files), and, although it's not documented, bit-mapped images (from DEGAS, for example) can be traced with an invisible polygon to define text flow boundaries within the picture frame.

PageStream's impressive printing features (thumbnails, tiling, color separations, etc.) now work as advertised, although speed problems are particularly evident on some functions. One frustrating bug I noted in the earlier versions--the near-microscopic precision required to change the placement of the invisible "guides" that insure proper alignment--has

also been cured. Clicking near the guide is now sufficient to remove it.

If only Soft-Logik had taken as much care in optimizing the code. As pages grow in complexity, working with *PageStream* becomes an exercise in patience, as the screen-redraw time increases exponentially. Incredibly, greeking the text (displaying text too small to read as a hatched line) does nothing to help. In programs such as *Ventura Publisher* for the IBM PC, greeking text can speed up the display by a factor of five to ten. Perhaps that speed-up can be attributed to Ventura's use of a single unbroken line to represent a line of text rather than *PageStream's* small slashes for each character.

One way to speed up screen updates is to redraw only the parts that have changed, a process known as a "smart redraw." A classic example is line-by-line scrolling. Since 95% of the screen remains unchanged, a smart scroll simply shifts the screen up a line and just redraws a new line on the top or bottom. *PageStream*, in comparison, redraws the entire screen. Even after an operation as benign as setting a tab, the screen blanks and starts from scratch, a process that can take nearly a minute for a complex page. One suspects that Soft-Logik is trying to avoid the beta version's tendency to leave garbage all over the screen after changes. Rather than write smarter code, however, they have taken the brute force approach--redraw everything--instead.

Printing speed also continues to be a problem. While a simple 8.5 x 11 inch page can be printed in about 15 minutes on a laser printer, and even faster on a nine-pin dot matrix, larger and more complex pages bog down completely. (Note: These tests assume a megabyte of free memory; with only a half-megabyte, printing is slower by 25-50%.) One benchmark tested printing speed for an 11 x 17 inch page (a reproduction of a typical tabloid newspaper). That experiment was eventually halted when it became obvious that the full page would take several days to finish on an HP DeskJet. The same benchmark takes less than 30 minutes on the DeskJet with *Ventura Publisher* running on an IBM AT. The only reasonable solution with *PageStream* is to print a Postscript file to disk (a 10-15 minute process) and find a Postscript printer to feed it to.

Theoretically, the printing time should be no longer than the redrawing time times the difference in resolution between the screen and the printer. Since the screen has a resolution of 75dpi x 75dpi and the DeskJet 300dpi x 300dpi, printing should only take about 16 times as long as screen redrawing; or about 12 minutes. Even allowing for overhead like tiling overlap and the speed of the printer itself, it should be possible to print a 11x17 page in less than 20 minutes.

Softlogic states they are aware of this deficiency and expect, in the next update, to cure this problem. In the meantime, they state they intend to be around for some time supporting their product. Incidentally, they are about to start shipping the Amiga version of *Page Stream*.

The irony is that *PageStream's* performance problems are most severe in the one domain it is best suited for. By being more cumbersome and less intuitive than simpler DTP programs such as *Publisher ST*, *PageStream* is not the best choice for simple newsletters and letter-sized publications. But for newspapers, magazines, and sophisticated layouts, applications for which *PageStream* has no peer, the program's inefficiency can bring productivity screeching to a halt. Although there may be nothing else for the ST that can touch *PageStream* for features, one might well be advised to wait for a speeded-up version before committing to serious projects.

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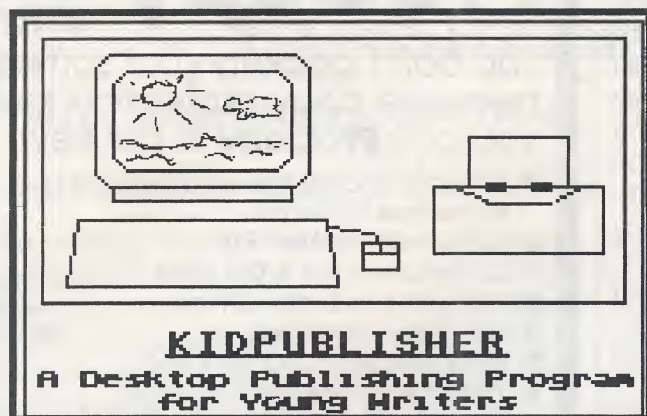
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Review by Bill Moes

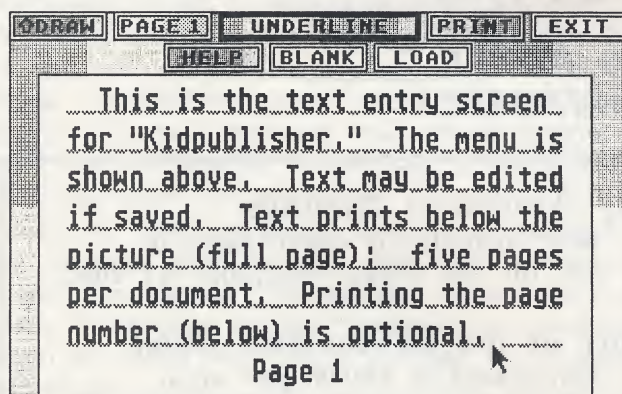
Kidpublisher is a desktop publishing program for young writers. Each page is divided into two sections: graphics and text.

The features are very limited and obvious, so children in the targeted age range (4–12 years) should quickly understand their use. Low resolution color is used to brighten the menus, although the drawing and text are only black on white.

With a click on Type or Draw, it's easy to switch from one work screen to the other. Going from page to page is also obvious and easy.

With an Exit, dialog boxes ask if the document is to be saved. Each document must be saved on a separate disk and uses about 200K of disk space (5 graphics @ 32K each plus the text).

Documentation (1,800 words) is on the disk and clearly explains the software.



Kidpublisher's text screen (above) uses large, easy-to-read, text. The Print item is a screen dump; printers that work with the ST's screen dump routine should have no trouble in printing the documents. Each printed page is divided into two sections: art on the top half of the page and text on the lower half.

Kidpublisher (CN ST Library disk 294D) was written by D. A. Brumleve. He considers this program to be "careware" and asks those who find *Kidpublisher* (v.2.1) worthwhile to make a \$10 donation to the ST lab of a school he names.

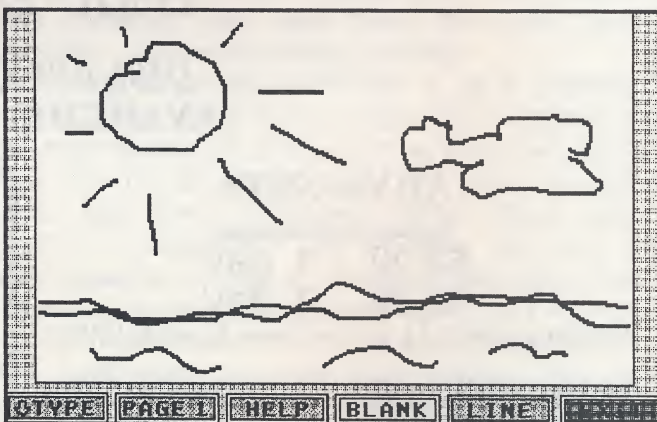
Brumleve is a prolific author of ST software for children and he certainly deserves great credit for his contributions. The documentation lists more than a dozen programs he has freely distributed, including drawing, music, and game software. Many of these other programs are available through this magazine (CN ST Library disks 179 and 211).

Unfortunately, *Kidpublisher* has a problem: there is no automatic word wrap.

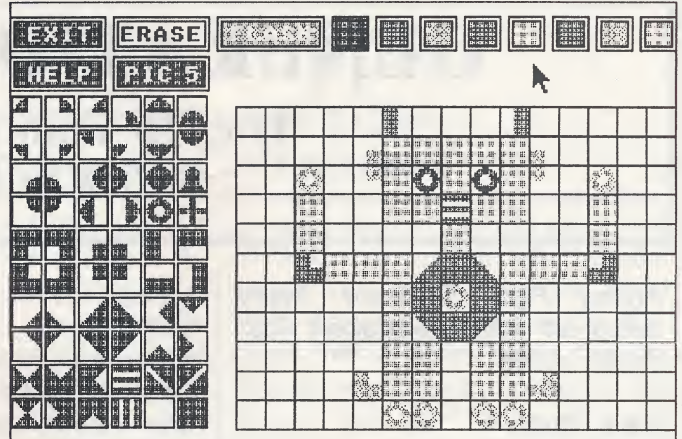
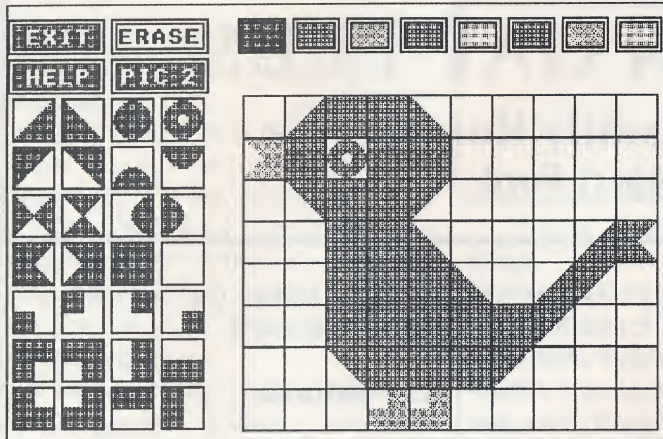
This is likely to be the first experience many children have with a word processor/desktop publishing program. And it would be helpful if that first experience included that most valuable feature.

The v.e.r.y. s.l.o.w. keyboard may have advantages. And the rudimentary graphics keep things simple. But young writers should not have to deal with a text entry system lacking word wrap. They should not have to later unlearn bad habits they'll pick up here.

With that one exception, *Kidpublisher* can be fun and worthwhile. It's an interesting and easy way for young children to use an ST as they prepare school reports, their own books, newspapers, poems, posters, or stories. The output, while just screen dumps, can be impressive.



Kidpublisher's drawing screen (above) uses only free-hand drawing. This, obviously, makes drawing very difficult. A click on Line will change that item to a block Erase for small mistakes. The entire screen is cleared with a click on Blank. When printed, the drawing will be enclosed in a narrow line frame.



Kidshapes and *Kidshapes+*.

Both use predesigned shapes to create a picture. Easy and creative entertainment for children.

First choose a color, one of the eight (8) colors available. Next, pick a shape. The basic *Kidshapes* has 27 design shapes for its 10X8 grid. The more advanced *Kidshapes+* has 59 designs to use in its 15X11 grid. Each also has an empty block available.

Once a design shape is selected, go to the picture grid and click to place that design in one of the grid blocks. That's all there is to it. A new shape will replace any shape already in a grid block.

When a new color is selected, all design shapes change to that selected color. Each program includes five pictures in memory at one time. Click the picture number

on the menu at the top of the screen to display the next picture.

Kidshapes+ also has a "flash" feature. With this, selected design blocks will flash on/off. It's an interesting way to easily add some animation to designs. Perhaps the flash could be the beacon of a lighthouse ... the lights of a police car ... the wink of an eye.

Documentation for these programs is available through a series of "Help" screens, although the programs are straight-forward and relatively simple.

When it's time to Exit, dialog boxes will offer the chance to save created designs and will then confirm the exit.

Eight colors are probably enough, much like an eight-pack of Crayolas, although some may feel

limited on the color choice. It's not possible to edit the design shapes.

The *Kidshapes* programs were written by D. A. Brumleve. Brumleve has written many other children's software programs for the ST, including *Preschool KidProgs* (CN June 1988). The author considers the *Kidshapes* programs to be "careware," and asks that users who find them of use make a \$10 donation to the ST lab of a school he names.

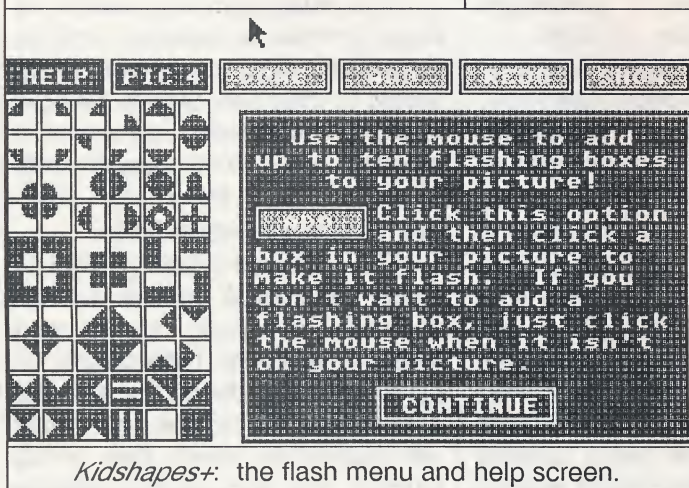
The programs are well-designed. Children should need little guidance to get started. Either mouse button will work and the menus are simple and obvious. Both programs include an auto-load folder. There are simple musical sound effects at appropriate times.

Kidshapes and *Kidshapes+* (CN ST Library disk 294D) are design programs for children. They are easy and enjoyable to use. While the created graphics will, of course, be limited by the format of the programs, there are still good opportunities for creative entertainment.

Kidshapes

A Graphics Design Program For Children

Review by Bill Moes



Kidshapes+: the flash menu and help screen.

GENERATION GAP PLUS

Dig Up Your Family Roots!

Review by Robert Ford

Flying Pigs Software finally takes off with Generation Gap PLUS 4.20!

Yes, But..

In the March 1988 issue of Current Notes, I discussed Genealogy Software for the ST. I got my first computer because my data base became too large to manage by hand. At the time, I did not realize that genealogy software was unavailable. I waited for over a year. *Generation Gap* was the first commercial program available. You cannot imagine my joy, but...

In that article, I recommend *Compute Your Roots* by Wasatch Genealogical Software without saying why I did not use *Generation Gap* version 3.18.

OK, So What?

We all have seen how one software developer will continually improve a program, particularly when there is competition. So it is with Steve Barker of Flying Pigs Software. Blessed be to the PC, Amen!

All previous versions of *Generation Gap* up through version 4.18 are written in a compiled version of *dBMAN* 4.0. They will run on any ST or Mega. *Generation Gap PLUS* 4.20 is written with *dBMAN* 5.0. It will, however, only work with a 1040ST or a Mega.

For a very small fee, any version of *GG* can be upgraded to *GGP* 4.20 for \$7.00. If you have a 520ST, you may want to upgrade to version 4.18 of *Generation Gap* for only \$5.00 which includes a new

manual. You can upgrade versions 4.0/4.15 to *GG* 4.18 for \$2.00. Both version 4.18 of *GG* and *GGP* 4.20 are very much improved. They have features which will compare with the best available for the IBM'ers. Upgrading is worth it!

Any file made with a previous version of *GG* can be converted to run with *GGP*. A conversion utility is included with the program.

Generation Gap PLUS is not copy protected, so make a backup copy first thing. You can create and save 400 individual records on a single-sided disk or 800 on a double-sided, or install it on your hard disk and create two billion records.

Is Genealogy Hard?

Good genealogy is not too difficult, but it is time consuming. It can be fun but complex, if your ancestor hid his past as did mine. Your work must be done in a scholarly manner if it is to be accepted by others.

I know that only a few of you are truly interested in genealogy. It's not until your children are grown and start asking comprehensive questions about their forebears that it takes on a personal meaning. Yet this software proves what a great machine we use, without the high price. The fact you are reading this proves what a great magazine Current Notes is by being more interested in all the readers rather than just programmers or game players.

Generation Gap PLUS is the best program of its genre currently available. I have also been assured

by Steve Barker that he will continue to improve it.

Its Features.

The main program screen allows selections from five drop-down option menus. They are straight forward and easy to follow. The "Add Record" option contains eight selections for your data base. You must use the "Quit" command under this option to exit the program. If you do not, you may pay the price!

The input screen is well designed. Entering an individual record in the "New Records" file will establish a data base from which you can create any family group, or print out desired information. You create a record, save it, and then proceed to the next person. The program will assign an individual number to each person. You can also use your own numbering system by adding a "Pin #." You must indicate if a person is in your direct line in order to print out your family tree.

You must be very careful to properly enter a person's mother and father just as you entered those names in their own record. Being a relational data base management program, you must always enter information the same way every time, or you will get GI-GO!

The "Create Family Group" option is central to the correct operation of group sheets and pedigree printouts. They cannot be printed until a family group has been created for all the people that will appear on them. This is the function that links all the relatives

and family members together. This can be done automatically or manually.

The general edit permits you to page through all data from the beginning of a file. Since *dBMAN* is a very powerful program, the search function is fast. You can edit any individual or family group at any time. You can show information several ways.

The printout menu will print family group sheets, pedigree charts, names by ID number, and individual records on 80 column paper, including the memo fields on each person or family group.

The use of function keys is supported, and will be displayed at the top and as the last line on the screen for most applications. Use of these keys is well thought out, and will save time when building a large data base.

One major problem with most genealogy software is that they do not provide a satisfactory way to indicate the source of documentation necessary for proving the origin of the family information. This is not the case with Flying Pigs Software! With *GG* and *GGP*, memo fields on an individual's record will permit adequate space for information on that person. The size of the memo fields is limited only by the disk space. A very nice feature is that you can use either your favorite word processor or the simple one provided in the program. Setting up your own word processor is easy to do.

Well Now...

I highly recommend both *GG* and *GGP*. You, too, can now take off with it and dig up your family roots.

Generatiion Gap Plus, \$39.95, FLYING PIGS SOFTWARE, P.O. Box 688, St. George, UT 84770 (801) 628-5713 (After 6 P.M. Mountain Time)

Tower Toppler

Addicting Arcade Action

Review by Kirk Osterman

You've probably heard the old adage "You can't judge a book by its cover." Well, if *Tower Toppler*, a new game by Epyx, is any example the same holds true for software. I have to admit that I didn't think I was going to like this software when I looked at the box. After all the illustrations on the packaging looked as if they were drawn by any average seven year old, the description on the back sounded less than thrilling, and the screen shots on the back of the box were from the Commodore 64 version.

Was I ever surprised when the program came up with some pretty nifty graphics and I became addicted to *Toppler*. The object of the game is to climb to the top of a tower that has erupted out of the ocean, while avoiding the obstacles like bouncing boulders and 'mutant molecules' that guard the tower. In addition to this, some of the ledges that you are climbing will suddenly just disintegrate. Contact with any of the game's other creatures will cause you to fall back to a previous tier or all the way down to the sea, costing you a life. As if this weren't enough, there is also a time limit for each tower.

Once you make it all the way to the top of a tower it collapses down to the sea and you board a mini-sub where you engage in what amounts to a "shoot 'em up" to gain bonus points and extra time to climb the next tower. All in all there are eight towers per mission, and two missions in the game. I've played more hours than I should have and have only gotten to the third tower of the first mission. I suppose that means either that I'm a lousy player or that it's a challenging game. Anyway, each time

you play you want to get just a little bit farther so you can see the next scene and set of obstacles. More often than not, however, you discover that it takes some thought and experimentation to figure out how to get past some of those obstacles. In fact, this game reminds me a lot of *Jumpman Jr.*, one of my favorite 8-bit games, but with the graphics you would expect from a coin-op.

Actually, it was the graphics that may have been my biggest surprise. Not only does the tower give the impression of three dimensional rotation but the water at the bottom of the tower shows the reflections of the objects on the screen. Also, they have gone through the extra effort of producing more than just sixteen colors on the screen at once, giving this game a true arcade look and feel.

All this is not to say that the game is perfect. For example, although the game allows you to enter your initials for a high score, it does not save them to disk. Secondly, the joystick has to be connected to the mouse port. Since the game only uses one joystick there is no reason why it should not use the other port and thus save the inconvenience of plugging and unplugging the mouse.

Tower Toppler deserves high marks in the categories of addictiveness, playability, and graphics. Its suggested price is \$49.95 so you will probably want to take a look at it at your local dealer before you lay out your cash for it, but if you're like me, this may well become one of your favorites.

[ST Editor Comment: This closely parallels my reaction to the game.]



by
**Joseph
Russek**

GRAPHIC

This brief program creates two, three-dimensional step-like figures attached to each other. The various pinks and the shadings between each are quite attractive.

```
10 GRAPHICS 7+16
20 SETCOLOR 0,4,8:SETCOLOR 1,4,6:SETCOLOR 2,4,5
30 COLOR 1:PLOT 25,0:DRAWTO 75,0
40 DRAWTO 50,50:DRAWTO 0,50:DRAWTO 25,0
50 POKE 765,1
60 POSITION 1,49:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
70 COLOR 2:PLOT 50,51:DRAWTO 50,90:DRAWTO
0,90:DRAWTO 0,50
80 POSITION 1,89:POKE 765,2:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
90 COLOR 3:PLOT 51,90:DRAWTO 61,70:DRAWTO 61,55
100 DRAWTO 76,25:DRAWTO 76,0
110 POKE 765,3:POSITION 51,50:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
120 PLOT 51,50:POSITION 51,89:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
130 COLOR 1:PLOT 62,55:DRAWTO 76,25:DRAWTO
100,25:DRAWTO 87,55:DRAWTO 62,55
140 POKE 765,1:POSITION 76,25:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
150 COLOR 2:PLOT 62,56:DRAWTO 62,70:DRAWTO
87,70:DRAWTO 87,56:DRAWTO 63,56
160 POKE 765,2:POSITION 63,70:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
170 COLOR 3:PLOT 88,70:DRAWTO 101,40:DRAWTO
101,25:PLOT 100,26
180 POSITION 87,56:POKE 765,3:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
190 PLOT 87,56:POSITION 87,69:XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"
200 IF PEEK(764)=255 AND STRIG(0)=1 THEN 200
```

JOYDRAW

This joystick demo by Jerry White is actually a simple drawing program. All you have to do is follow the on-screen directions. A warning: keep your finger on the joystick button while drawing; moving the joystick without pressing the button, will bring up an error message.

```
40 GRAPHICS 17:? #6:? #6:? #6," JOYSTICK DEMO"
50 ? #6:? #6," BY JERRY WHITE"
60 ? #6:? #6:? #6," PLUG JOYSTICK INTO"
70 ? #6:? #6," JACK NUMBER ONE."
80 ? #6:? #6:? #6,"HOLD TRIGGER TO DRAW"
```

```
90 ? #6," RELEASE TO ERASE"
100 IF STICK(0)<>15 THEN 130
110 IF STRIG(0)<>1 THEN 130
120 GOTO 100
130 X=19:Y=10:REM STARTING POSITION
140 GRAPHICS 3:POKE 764,255:POKE 752,1:SETCOLOR
2,0,0:S=STICK(0):GOTO 290
150 S=STICK(0):IF PEEK(764)<>255 THEN GRAPHICS
0:POKE 764,255:? :? "LOADING MENU";:RUN "D:MENU"
160 IF S=15 THEN 150
170 IF S=5 THEN X=X+1:Y=Y+1
180 IF S=6 THEN Y=Y-1:X=X+1
190 IF S=7 THEN X=X+1
200 IF S=9 THEN X=X-1:Y=Y+1
210 IF S=10 THEN X=X-1:Y=Y-1
220 IF S=11 THEN X=X-1
230 IF S=13 THEN Y=Y+1
240 IF S=14 THEN Y=Y-1
250 IF X<0 THEN X=0
260 IF Y<0 THEN Y=0
270 IF X>39 THEN X=39
280 IF Y>19 THEN Y=19
290 ? , " STICK(0)=";S
300 POKE 53279,0:REM CLICK SPEAKER
310 IF STRIG(0)=1 THEN 330
320 PX=X:PY=Y:COLOR 1:PLOT X,Y:GOTO 150
340 COLOR 0:PLOT PX,PY
350 COLOR 1:PLOT X,Y
360 PX=X:PY=Y:GOTO 150
```

GR8TEXT

This second Jerry White program allows the user to enter text on a text line, then to press RETURN, and to see it appear in Graphics 8 mode on the main screen.

```
0 GOTO 100:REM GR8TEXT BY JERRY WHITE
40 W1=PEEK(88)+PEEK(89)*256:W2=W1+Y*40+X:IF
LEN(TEXT$)=0 THEN 200
42 FOR ME=1 TO LEN(TEXT$):X=ASC(TEXT$(ME,ME)):IF
X>127 THEN X=X-128
44 IF X>31 AND X<96 THEN X=X-32:GOTO 48
46 IF X<32 THEN X=X+64
48 TEXT$(ME,ME)=CHR$(X):NEXT ME
50 FOR Z=1 TO LEN(TEXT$):X=ASC(TEXT$(Z
,Z)):W3=57344+X*8:FOR ME=0 TO 7:POKE
W2+ME*40,PEEK(W3+ME):NEXT ME:W2=W2+1:NEXT Z
60 IF Y>100 THEN FOR Y=1 TO 300:NEXT Y:RUN
70 ? "JENTER TEXT";:INPUT TEXT$:X=10:Y=Y+20:?
"}DISPLAY RATE= 6 CHARACTERS PER SECOND";:GOTO
40
100 DIM TEXT$(30):X=5:Y=20:GRAPHICS 8:TEXT$=" ***
Graphics Mode 8 Text ***":SETCOLOR 2,0,0:COLOR 1
110 PLOT 13,18:DRAWTO 300,18:DRAWTO
300,30:DRAWTO 13,30:DRAWTO 13,18:GOTO 40
200 GRAPHICS 0:? :? "LOADING MENU";:RUN "D:MENU"
```


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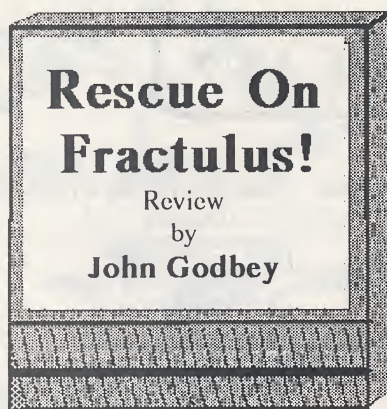
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The old Lucasfilm game *Rescue On Fractulus!* is now available in a cartridge for Atari computers. The cartridge version appears to play exactly like the older disk version. The cartridge, of course, can't save high scores; but other than that, the game is identical. It comes with an eleven-page instruction manual, which is quite good for a game.

The game begins with an impressive graphic of the Mother Ship, near the planet Fractulus. You are the pilot of a small fighter space ship which leaves the Mother Ship and flies to Fractulus to pick up stranded pilots. Once you have picked up the required number of

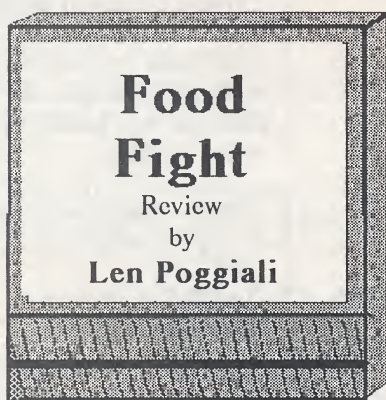
pilots, you return to the Mother Ship and prepare for another mission.

This game features impressive graphics and sound. It was state-of-the-art when it first came out, and I don't believe it has yet been surpassed by any of the "flying" games. Your view is from inside the fighter's cockpit. The bottom of the screen shows the control panel, which indicates your speed, direction, fuel, and so on. The top half of the screen is the landscape of Fractulus. This is a randomly generated mountain range, on which are enemy gun emplacements and the downed pilots. Using the joystick to control altitude and direction, and the keyboard to control speed, you fly around the planet looking for downed planes. When you find one, you land, pick up the stranded pilot, and take off to search for another. Along the way you must deal with the enemy gun emplacements and the enemy fighter planes—either avoiding them with your flying ability, or blasting them away with your own gun. Your radar screen and other instruments

help you locate both friendly downed planes, and enemy guns. These instruments are helpful during the daytime missions, and essential during nighttime missions.

There are 30 levels of play. The higher the level of play, the more pilots you must rescue before returning to the Mother Ship, and the more frequently you are attacked by enemy planes. At the highest levels there are cycles of day and night. Your score depends upon the number of pilots you rescue and return to the Mother Ship, the number of enemy guns and planes you destroy, and the levels you complete.

Rescue On Fractulus! is a very well done game. Technically, it is one of the most impressive games I know of for the 8-bit Atari. In "playability" it does not rank quite so high. It is an arcade style game, but it is not quite fast moving enough to be completely satisfying. At the lower levels, especially, there can be long times of cruising the landscape of Fractulus during which nothing much happens. All in all, however, I highly recommend this game.



One of Atari's newest XE carts is a translation of the hit arcade game *Food Fight*. The game's plot is simplicity itself. A little guy named Charley loves to eat. When he attended the carnival one day, he headed straight for the food fight contest. Atari obviously is not giving us a program whose story line will challenge that of an Ultima or an Infocom text adventure.

The game screen consists of Charley (placed on the far left), from one to four hostile chefs (randomly placed), manholes (some open, some closed), various foodstuffs, and an ice cream cone (on the far right). During each food fight, our hero has about thirty seconds to race across the screen to the ice cream cone and to eat it before his time runs out. To arrive safely Charley must dodge chefs and food thrown by them, and open manholes. If he does not, he loses one of his 3 to 15 lives and is buried under all of the food remaining on the screen.

Charley also is able to throw food. He can grab some by running over it; then temporarily put the chefs out of commission by hitting them with an object or by forcing them back into an open manhole.

Eating the cone completes a level; then Charley is transported to the next screen to repeat the process ad nauseam.

If I seem less than enthusiastic about this game, then I have succeeded in projecting my feelings. There is almost nothing about *Food Fight* that appeals to me. Not only is the plot mindless, but the designers have allowed for almost no variety. At simpler levels chefs do not toss food; there are fewer chefs and manholes in the lower game levels; and the food varies from screen to screen, but that is about it. The graphics are clear and reasonably well drawn, but, for the most part, uninspired. The musical score consists of the tune played before a horse race. What that has to do with a carnival food fight is beyond me.

(Continued on Page 63)

Providing four skill levels is a definite plus. Another very nice feature is the ability to begin at any level from one to sixteen. Also, after losing all of one's lives, the player may begin again from the level where he left off, even if it's above level sixteen. In this way my son has made it to level 100 in the intermediate version.

Although *Food Fight* wouldn't receive a passing grade from me, for the moment, it is one of the favorites of my two young children (aged nine and seven). Apparently the easy flow of the game play, the cuteness of the major character, the sheer repetition of it all, and the general messiness of the theme have contributed to making this a hit for them.

Based on their enthusiasm for this product, I would have to give *Food Fight* a qualified B-. However, if you are middle aged and have had it with arcade games that strain your reflexes and offer little else, then save your \$19.95.

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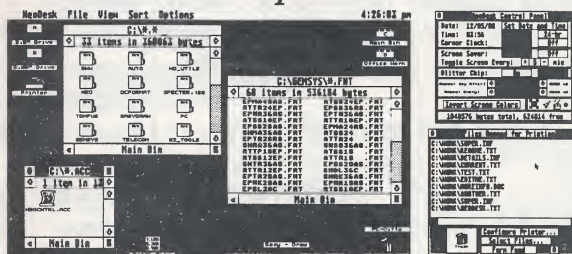
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VIDEO TITLE SHOP

Review by Joseph Russek

When I heard that a new program was available that would enhance graphic abilities, I wanted to be sure that I got it. When I was asked to review the program, I was delighted. I immediately put the disk into the drive and turned on the computer.

Then the fun began, and I began to remember why I have always returned all DataSoft programs. The drive spun a little and stopped. Only a jumble was on the screen. Then I removed BASIC and tried again. The drive spun a little more, and a picture came on the screen—then stopped and froze.

I then tried the other side of the disk which has the original *MicroPainter*. This was the first and most popular painting program for the Atari and was the program that most of the printer drivers worked with. This program and the excellent pictures that are on separate disks makes the package worth the \$29.95 that the program is selling for, even though other painting programs are now available with more power.

Well, I had to figure out why I couldn't get *Video Title Shop* to work. I have a 1200XL with an ATR8000 (interface for printing and modem) that has two slave 360K double-density, double-sided drives in a common case. The ATR8000 feeds a printer buffer ahead of both a dot matrix and a color ink jet printer. Having loaded and printed over 500 pictures with many programs, I was still scratching my head when a tiny slip of paper fell out of the box. It said that the program wouldn't work with two drives. I have no way to turn off only one drive. I then turned off my disk system, connected my 1050 Happy drive, reconfigured it as

drive 1 instead of drive 3 and tried again. It worked.

The program showed a tropical island, and words started appearing in groups to start the program. Since there is no command screen, I had to keep the instructions right beside me. They are very wordy and sometimes very confusing. [CTRL]+L allows you to load any 62-sector *MicroPainter* picture onto the screen with sequences of words placed on the picture, while [CTRL]+S saves your work to disk. Then use the joystick or arrows to load a "blank sequence." A double return then is required. [CTRL]+H allows a change of pen colors, and [CTRL]+E allows editing. [CTRL]+F changes fonts. [CTRL]+P creates a new page, while [CTRL]+R copies a page to a new page. All this sounds easy and should be—but they have made it difficult.

Could any of you describe a font listed as "A8x8?" It is not possible to format a disk from within the program, which could be a real problem if a disk gets full, and the program is difficult to use. I found myself putting the program aside and promising to try again because of the difficulty. I still believe the program resembles some of the first attempts at movement from ten years ago.

I loaded a picture, set up a sequence file, picked a font, and began. I typed some words and pushed [CTRL]+P and was presented with the same picture and no words. I was on a new page. I added some additional words and pressed [CTRL]+P again. Then I pressed [OPTION] to view the results. It was very nice to see the flashing words over a birthday cake. I then pressed [CTRL]+S to save my sequence. I then turned

off the computer and reloaded the program. I was never again able to merge the picture and sequence. I could have the picture or sequence, but not both. By this time I was so annoyed with the program that I put it aside.

However, with a great deal of effort and frustration, it is possible to get semi-animated scenes to do titling on your VCR. If you do fancy filming and have patience, the program is worthwhile.

The other program—*MicroPainter*—which is included, was the original painting program and was the best available in its day. However, several programs such as *Koala* and *Rambrant* offered more features and were easier to use. Even a disk program on a monthly disk from ANALOG offered more features and required less disk space. *MicroPainter* is outdated but is still very good.

Would I buy this program? If I didn't have other painting programs and FADERII to create a slide show, I might. DataSoft should consider redoing the program to make it easier to use. If Apple users rave about this program, it proves that Atari has had equal or better programs for at least five years.

After all the problems loading the program, I found that you can make back-up copies by using the DOS "J" command to copy disk. It makes me wonder why the program couldn't have used a standard DOS so that it would work with multiple drives and would have been able to transfer to the new double-sided Atari drives with pictures on the same disk as the program. DataSoft will get Atari support when they treat us with respect and produce programs which are new and usable. Until then, I still don't have any DataSoft in my library.

(DataSoft, 19808 Nordhoff Place, Chatsworth, CA 91311, (818) 886-5922.)

SARACEN

Review by John Godbey

Saracen advertises itself as an arcade-strategy game that will work on any Atari with 48K and a disk drive. It comes on a double-sided disk and, in loading, you use both sides. You may play with joystick or the keyboard and start at any level. You must leave the disk in the drive, because the program loads new data every time you advance to a new level.

The story of the game goes as follows: you are Ilan, a crusader trying to drive Saracen infidels from the Holy Land. Armed only with a longbow, you make your way through a fortress maze trying to find and attack and kill the Saracen Chief. Once this is done, you are moved to another level, to seek and kill another Saracen chief.

Each level, or screen, presents a new fortress. The walls of the fortress form a maze. The maze contains locked doors which can only be opened with a key, one-way doors, safety zones, and so on. The fortress is patrolled by guards. If you come too close to the guards, you will be killed. In moving around the fortress you will find a supply of arrows for your longbow, keys for the locked doors, cannonballs, and other devices to use in getting to and killing the Saracen Chief. Using the supply of arrows and grenades which you find, you kill the guards and blow holes in the walls. Eventually you will be able to place a grenade next to the Chief, and shoot it with an arrow. Its explosion kills him, and you move to the next level.

As you scroll around the fortress, you will sometimes discover that the walls are shaped like letters, and these letters form messages. On one of the early levels, for example, the walls spell out "LOCK-IN THE SOLDIERS." This is the clue needed to pass this level.

Saracen is a competently constructed game, but doesn't set any new standards. A fairly catchy tune plays in the background while you play (fairly catchy at first, but after listening to it for half an hour or so, you'll grow to hate it and start turning the sound down). The graphics are colorful; movement is smooth; and the scrolling works as it should.

The instructions that came with my copy of *Saracen* told how to use the Apple and Commodore versions of the game, but not the Atari version. As a result I am not certain if the Atari version doesn't have some features which are available for other brands of computers, or if I just couldn't figure them out. For example, both the Apple and Commodore versions allow you to pause the game; I could not find any way to pause the Atari version. Other features that do not

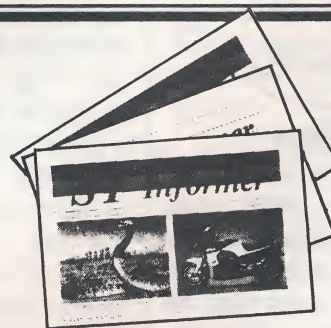
appear to be in the Atari version include a command to turn the sound on or off, and a command to restart the current level of play, or to return to the selection screen. Finally, both the Apple and Commodore versions have 100 levels of play; the Atari version has only 90.

The arcade qualities of this game are minimal. Some dexterity with the joystick is required in shooting the soldiers who attack you, and a bit in avoiding cannonballs. But both of these tasks will be simple for seasoned game players.

The adventure elements are rather simple, too, at least at the lower levels. You should be able to solve the early screens in four or five minutes. However they get progressively more complex, and by the time you reach level fifteen or twenty, you will find that the game presents quite a challenge.

Saracen does not have enough originality to recommend it to those of you with much experience in either arcade or strategy games. However, if you have a beginning player in your house, who will appreciate a game with a number of levels which are easy to master, you should consider *Saracen*.

(Datasoft, 19808 Nordhoff Place, Chatsworth, CA 91311. List price: \$19.95.)



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THE NEWSROOM CLIP ART COLLECTIONS & THE CONVERTER

Review by John Godbey

For those of us who are not artists, the worth of any newsletter/poster/graphics program is directly related to the variety and quality of its available picture collection. *Print Shop* derives much of its power and usefulness—not to mention popularity—from the hundreds or thousands of *Print Shop* pictures available commercially and on public domain disks. It is in large measure because of this art that it is so much more popular than, for example *Printpower*, a program which is in almost every other way superior to *Print Shop*.



In the September, 1988, issue of Current Notes I reviewed *The Newsroom*, the most recent newsletter program for the 8-bit Atari. As I said in that review, it is an excellent program—but does it have the quality and quantity of graphics available to make it really useful?

Springboard has tried to give its users a plentiful supply of art. The program itself comes with about 600 different pieces of clip art. Volume 1 of the *Clip Art Collections* contains over 600 general pictures; volume 2, over 800 “business” pictures; and volume 3, over 600 “sports and recreation” pictures. If you have the basic program and these three disks, you have over 2,600 different pieces of clip art to work with.

These three disks continue the high standards which Springboard set with *The Newsroom*. Each disk comes with a 20- to 25-page booklet which contains, in addition to reproductions of each piece of clip art, suggestions for using and combining the pictures in different and useful ways. The company still has a lifetime \$5.00 replacement policy, and a customer support “hotline.” Springboard still copy protects its disks, but with the replacement policy, this is not as horrible as it is with some other software publishers.

The clip art disk that comes with the main program is mostly cartoon art. It contains a large number of animal pictures—about 30 different cat pictures, for example. It also contains a variety of people in various comic poses and a dozen maps of different parts of the world.

According to the instruction manuals, Springboard tried to strike a better balance between realistic art and cartoonish art in its three clip art disks. For my taste the company still leans too heavily toward the cartoonish; but the mix may be just your cup of tea.

Volume 1 contains more animals, a number of borders which can be used with pictures or text, flags, a new font, a template to construct calendars, and a variety of other pictures. Volume 2 contains additional borders, business machines and symbols, and some templates for making charts and graphs. Volume 3 contains hundreds of pictures of people engaged in various sports, related art such as trophies, and sports words written in fancy fonts.

As I pointed out in my review of *The Newsroom*, that program has an unusually nice graphics editor. This editor allows you to easily make changes to the pictures to tailor them to your individual needs. Pictures are easily flipped from left to right, and combined with one another. It is easy to add text to the pictures, or to put them in frames or fill them with different patterns. The “magnifying glass” option allows for relatively easy modifications or additions of details of the pictures.

The Atari versions of the clip art disks do not contain all of the art work which is on the disks for other computer brands. This seems to be a simple function of the more limited disk capacity that Atari offers.



In summary, these are good programs which will greatly increase the usefulness of *The Newsroom*.

For those who would like to make use of *Print Shop* pictures in *The Newsroom*, or in Hi Tech Expression's *Printpower* or *Awardware*, No Frills Software has just put out *The Converter*. This program allows you to take *Print Shop* icons and convert them quickly and easily to the other formats. At \$19.95 it is certainly a bargain—it will give you access to literally thousands of additional pictures for *The Newsroom* at the price of one

of *The Newsroom* Clip Art disks. Not only that, but the program is not copy protected, so you can make a backup and not have to worry about disaster striking your master disk. One caution, however: the program does not seem to be compatible with the old Atari 800 operating system; it only works on the XL and XE computers.

It is hard to imagine a program any easier to use than this one. When booted, its menu gives the choice of loading a picture, saving a picture, editing a picture, or converting a picture from *Awardware* to *Printpower* format. If you choose load, and indicate the proper drive number, it checks to see if the disk is a *Print Shop* icon disk, or one of the Hi Tech Expressions disks. After getting the name of the specific icon or picture, the program loads it, and displays it in a box in the upper left of the screen. You can then edit the picture with some built-in elementary graphic commands, or save it to disk. When you are ready to save the picture, select the name under which you want it to be saved, and the type format, and the program will save it (formatting a data disk if necessary). A final command allows the conversion of a disk of *Awardware* graphics to *Printpower* graphics.

That's it. It's simple; it's straightforward; and it works. For twenty bucks *The Converter* allows you to use the entire library of *Print Shop* icons in *Printpower* and *The Newsroom* programs. This is highly recommended for those who use these programs.

[The Newsroom CLIP ART COLLECTION (Three volumes). List: \$29.95 each, but often available as a "special" for \$19.95, Springboard Software, Inc., 7808 CreekrIDGE Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55435.]

THE CONVERTER, List: \$19.95, No Frills Software, 800 East 23rd Street, Kearney, Nebraska 68847.]

BISMARCK: THE NORTH SEA CHASE

Review by Patrick H. Adkins

Bismarck: The North Sea Chase combines the fast action of an arcade-style battleship simulation with the intellectual challenge of a war strategy game. Newly released on disk by Datasoft for all Atari 48K or better machines, it boasts an hour-by-hour reenactment of the last voyage of the German submarine Bismarck and the frantic attempt of the British naval forces to intercept and sink that legendary terror of the seas.

The game begins with an option screen, where the player can choose to play either the British or German role. One can also select a standard game or skip directly to one of five predetermined "Action Screen" engagements, such as the Bismarck and Prinz Eugen versus the Hood and the Prince of Wales. It's even possible to man a Swordfish torpedo plane for a close encounter with the dreaded Bismarck. Another option allows you to load and play a previously stored game, but there is no option for more than one player at a time.

Selecting the Standard Game option takes the player to a map screen, where a twenty-four hour clock keeps track of the passage of time from 0400 May 22, 1941 to 2400 May 27, 1941. On the map itself one can find information concerning the locations of various ships, air bases, ports, mines, pack ice, and changing weather conditions—all critical to the success of the mission. The player uses the joystick to gather desired information, then to select a vessel. Pressing the fire button activates the "Action Screen" for the selec-

ted vessel.

Now, from the deck of a battleship, cruiser, carrier, or light cruiser (or from aboard the Bismarck itself), you must begin the hunt for the enemy. A full range of controls is available, as are various options that allow you to identify sighted vessels, judge distances to your target, and adjust gun arc and bearing. Once you locate the enemy. The joystick is used to unleash the vessel's artillery or other weapons, such as aircraft and torpedoes. Different vessels boast different weaponry, assets and liabilities. If hit, one can disengage the joystick from the guns, select the appropriate icon, and engage the Fire Control Unit to put out the flames.

In general, the graphics are limited but of good quality. Joystick controls are straightforward and easy to master; some limited keyboard entry is necessary. The game is attractively packaged, featuring a sixteen-page instruction manual that is nicely designed and quite clear, though perhaps a little too roundabout in its presentation. The manual was prepared for the earlier Commodore version of the game, and a two-sided insert for the Atari is included with it.

Bismarck is complex and well thought out. If you like both strategy games and arcade-style action, this one may be just what you've been looking for—a challenge with an historical edge. It isn't easy, but it also isn't a game you'll have mastered in an hour or two.

[Datasoft, 19808 Nordhoff Place, Chatsworth, CA 91311, (818) 886-5922.]

BLAZING PADDLES

An Excellent Paint Program from Baudville

Review by Lincoln Hallen

It's great! I loved it! Everything else I say is simply to support these phrases.

Blazing Paddles (any relation to *Blazing Saddles*?) is an excellent paint program. Besides having all the features of *Atariartist* or the *Koala Pad*, it also can be used with these touch tablets, as well as paddles, a joystick or a lightpen. It also comes with different text fonts and pre-drawn shapes and includes a printer dump for most black and white and color printers.

Features

The first menu that appears asks for the kind of input device you want to use. The device you choose is the method used to control the cursor. The button on the device is called the "do" button and when pressed allows you to make menu selections. The "undo" button is either the right button on the touch tablet or the Break key on the keyboard.

Next, you are presented with the main menu which is really a bunch of icons or images of things you want to do. By moving the cursor to the correct icon and pressing the "do" button, the item you select is activated.

Color selection: Although several hundred colors and textured patterns are available, you can get only four solid colors to appear simultaneously on the screen. If you have only a black and white matrix printer like I do, then the colors don't mean a lot. In fact, if you use the colors wrong, as I did one time, you can get a printout with half your stuff hidden from view. Can you tell I am not wild about color capabilities?

Text: If you want to add text to your picture or presentation, select the text icon. You are given a selection of three sizes from which to choose. You can add another character set if you pick one from the disk icon.

Disk: This allows you to format a disk for saving your pictures or to save or load data. This icon allows control of other character sets and other predrawn shapes.

Shapes: A number of shapes are contained in *Blazing Paddles*. These can be called up and added to your picture. You can change or modify the shape by flipping it, rotating it, or drawing on it.

Zoom: This feature is handled much better than what I've used in the past with a touch tablet. Zoom magnifies one part of the picture for a micro view but leaves the rest of the screen with the picture you are working on for a macro view.

Scroll: This option allows you to move the entire picture around the screen.

Mirror: This will produce a mirror image of any rectangular portion of the screen.

Sketch: This is the freehand draw mode controlled by whatever input device you originally chose.

Dots: This simply lets you add single dots.

Spray: This one creates an airbrush effect by spraying a bunch of dots on the picture.

Fill: This allows you to fill in shapes in your picture.

Line or Lines: These two selections allow one straight line or many connecting lines.

Oval or Oval 2: One is used to draw an outline of a circle or ellipse, and the other is the same thing except color filled.

Box or Box 2: Similar attributes of the ovals. One is the empty box, and the other is a filled box.

Window: This is the "cut" and "paste" feature. Cut allows you to clip a portion of your picture, move it around on the screen, or even save it to disk to be used later. Paste is used to copy or duplicate the image which was previously cut.

Clear screen: Guess what this option does.

Brushes: This allows you to pick up to seven different brush strokes for your cursor.

Printing: The "coup de grace" is being able to print out your picture on most any printer. This is a far cry from most picture software which requires other software and a few other tricks to get it printed. The speed is not bad and is much faster than a number of screen dumps I've used in the past.

Performance

Icons are easy to follow, and, along with the menus, this software can be used by most everyone familiar with a joystick. Sound is not a feature of this software—no bells or whistles. Graphics and speed are the important things here, and these are accomplished quite well. The bottom of the picture screen always shows the X and Y coordinates. The only option I had some trouble with was with color selection.

Ease of Use

I found this software easy to use, and not once did I get frustrated, as I usually do, by some awkward way of manipulating fea-

tures. After giving up using *Typesetter* from Xlent Software, which was laboriously troublesome, I found *Blazing Paddles* a pleasure to use. In fact, with the ability to mix text, pictures and free drawing together I doubt I will have to use *Typesetter* again.

Another nice feature is the built-in help icon which gives you a brief description of what is going on.

My one big question is "can you add more character sets and shapes developed under different software?" If you could tap into the extensive library of images and shapes available in the public domain, *Blazing Paddles* would be

an even more valuable tool for home and business.

Documentation

The book which comes with the software is quite good with pictures and easy-to-follow explanations. However, it was really written for a Commodore computer, and the Atari gets a supplemental insert. I hate when that happens. You have to look back and forth between the book and the supplement to figure things out. It took awhile to figure out I had to use the space bar to get back to the menu from the picture.

Support

After you buy the product (\$35 at your friendly store) and register with Baudville, you can pay for a backup disk or a replacement disk if necessary. There are other benefits for registering, including getting technical assistance from a toll (not free) number.

\$35 is now the common price for most 8-bit software. Even the junk costs this much. If anything is worth \$35, it would be *Blazing Paddles*.

[Baudville, 1001 Medical Park Drive, SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49506.]

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The 130XE Emulator and Xformer Serial Cable

(c) 1988 Darek Mihocka

It's been a long time coming, but the Atari 8-bit emulator known as the ST Xformer is about to make a giant leap forward. Starting in 1986 as a 6502 emulator, ST Xformer became a working Atari 400/800 emulator. It was fairly slow, running at about 15% the speed of a real Atari 400/800, and only Atari BASIC really ran successfully.

Over the course of several months, I managed to speed the emulator up to about 20% and add in graphics support, as well as both color and monochrome ST support. Some binary files worked, but no DOSes or boot disks could be ported over.

In the summer of 1988, I came up with ST Xformer II. It ran at an impressive 40%, and added 800XL emulation and supopr for almost any 8-bit program. This was done by creating a special file format on the ST which contains the sector information found on a 5 1/4" floppy. This allowed any DOS or boot disk to be ported to the ST and run on the Xformer. These special files are called "virtual disks" and are 90K in size, which is the storage capacity of a single density disk.

As good as this sounds, it was difficult to port over disks that didn't contain DOS files. Simple files can be moved using terminal software and a null modem cable, but how does one transfer over an entire disk? Fortunately, disk compression software, like Disk Communicator, already existed on the 8-bit Atari. This software turns a whole disk into a compressed file that can then be moved by modem to the ST and converted into a virtual disk file.

Other problems still existed. I had chosen to emulate the 8-bit disk drives in memory, so the virtual disks are first read into the ST's memory and then from the point of view of the 800XL, they are RAM-disks. This meant that Xformer required a 1040ST or a Mega to properly run, and even a 1040 only had room for two virtual disks.

A Problem Fixed

By now you've probably guessed what I'm leading up to. Surprise, surprise, the 130XE emulator fixes the problem! Not only will a 1040ST be able to emulate a 130XE with a 256K memory expansion, but the disk handling will be improved.

The first improvement already exists in ST Xformer II, versions 2.2 and higher. By building a simple cable, you can hook up almost any 8 bit peripheral to the ST, thus allowing disks to be booted directly from the 1050 disk drive, and output to be sent to the color plotter if you wish.

Before I give instructions on building the cable, which will also be supported by the 130XE emulator, let me mention how the new emulator will fix the virtual disk problem. Rather than loading the virtual disks into memory, they will remain on the ST disk, and sectors will be read as needed. A 520ST will thus be able to support up to 8 virtual disks. But there's more!

Recent changes now allow the Xformer to support virtual hard disks as well, allowing an ST hard disk to also function as an 8 bit hard disk. Simply set aside one of the partitions, up to 16 megabytes in size, tell Xformer which partition it is, and

boot up the emulator using either SpartaDOS or MyDOS. Presto!

Another feature that will be new to the 130XE emulator will be the ability to save and restore the context of the 130XE. Currently, you may freeze the emulator at any time, so as to install a new virtual disk or simply to get a screen dump of some 8-bit program. The new feature will allow the entire memory space of the 130XE to get saved to disk, for future retrieval.

Why is this handy? Suppose you're running some software that requires several minutes to initialize. Run it, and let it initialize, then save the context. Then to run the program in the future, simply restore the context and skip the whole initialization procedure. In another example, suppose you've just set some new high score in a video game. Nobody will believe a simple screen dump, which can be faked, but they will believe you when you pop up the actual game and high score on the emulator.

Save A Game

Or, suppose you're in the middle of some long adventure game that doesn't have a "save game" feature. It will now!

The 130XE emulator will be available in early 1989. It is also going to be the fastest Xformer to date, usually running at about 50% the speed of a 130XE, and it will also read 3 1/2" 8-bit disks directly (they are rare but do exist).

For now, grab yourself the latest version of ST Xformer II from the CN Library (#263) or Compuserve or Genie (probably version 2.3 or 2.4), dig up an old 810 or 1050 disk drive, and build yourself the following

cable. And if you haven't already done so, send in your \$20 shareware registration fee. Did I fail to mention that the 130XE emulator (with all these new features) will only be made available to registered ST Xformer users. Sorry folks, but I gotta pay rent too.

I am making the following information available to you with the understanding that it is for personal use only. I am not giving permission for anyone to manufacture and sell the cables themselves, or distribute my Xformer software for the purpose of helping to sell the cables. Needless to say, the Xformer is shareware and must not be sold by any dealer or individuals.

Building The Cable

Below are directions for putting together an Xformer cable. I accept no responsibility for fried machines, so do this at your own risk. Previous hardware experience, or at least previous experience with a soldering iron and screwdriver, is recommended.

The Xformer serial cable serves as an interface for 8 bit peripherals. Any self powered peripheral, like an 810 or 1050 disk drive, thermal printer, color plotter, 850 interface, etc. can then be accessed by the ST through either the Xformer emulator or other software. Multiple drives can be daisy chained to the ST, just as with the 8-bit, by using the regular serial cables to connect extra drives. The length of the cable is not critical, since 8 bit serial cables come in various sizes, usually 3 or 6 feet long. They are included with each disk drive, and most dealers have extra cables.

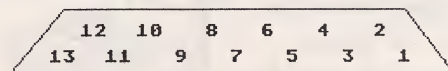
You don't really need the black serial cable as a starting point, since what you are really after are the 13 pin trapezoidal female connectors at the ends. Take some wire cutters

and cut the cable at one end. You will now have a 3 foot cable with a 13 pin connector at one end and 13 colored wires at the other.

If you have a standard Atari cable, the coloring scheme will be as follows: pin 2 (red), pin 3 (orange), pin 4 (black), pin 5 (green), pin 7 (purple), pin 10 (blue).

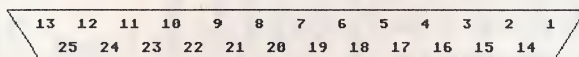
Only 6 of the 13 pins are needed, so disregard the other 7 wires. Not all Atari serial cables have the same coloring scheme, so use an ohmmeter to test each wire.

The pin numbering is as follows. If you hold the connector so that the row of 6 pins is at the top, and the other 7 pins are on the bottom, the pins are numbered:



You now require a male DB-25 connector. These are the 25 pin connectors found at one end of your ST printer cable. In fact, the Xformer cable plugs in into your ST's printer port. DB-25's are easy to find. Radio Shack sells them but you're better off at an electronics dealer, where they'll cost you about \$5, including the plastic cover.

The DB-25 cables have the pin numbers printed in very small print on the actual connector. If you hold the connector with the 13 pin row on the top and the 12 pin row on the bottom, the pins are numbered as follows:



The pins you need are 1, 3, 5, 7, 11, and 18. The table at right shows which colored wire gets soldered to which pin of the DB-25 connector. Again, these are usual colors, but vary from cable to cable, so use an ohmmeter to find the exact wires that correspond to pins 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 10.

Sometimes the black wire corresponds to pin 6 rather than pin 4. This is okay since both pins 4 and 6 are GROUND in the Atari serial cables.

Once soldered, screw the DB-25 covers over the connector, and use the ohmmeter once again to test the connections. If you made any mistakes, you could fry your ST!

WARNING: do not attempt to do stupid things like plugging the cable into an 8 bit computer, because this is exactly the same as plugging a serial cable between two 800XLs. (Nothing happens except that you might fry the machines).

Note that the +5 volt line coming out of the ST's printer port is not rated at 50mA (as is the Atari 8 bit serial port), so devices like the Ape Face which pull their power from the computer will not work. This is similar to the 1200XL serial port, which was also current limited. The only solution is to tap into the ST's 5 volt power supply, which can be easily accessed at the cartridge port. Most 8 bit drives and printers are self-powered and thus don't draw current from the computer.

The mailing address to register for ST Xformer II is: Darek Mihocka Box 2624, Station B Kitchener, Ontario N2H 6N2 CANADA

If possible, include a mailing label, but don't send a SASE. American stamps are useless in Canada. You will receive the latest version of ST Xformer, the User's Manual, and when it becomes available, the 130XE emulator.

Connecting Atari 13-pin to DB-25.

13 pin con- nector	color	DB-25	serial port function
2	red	3	CLOCK OUT
3	orange	11	DATA IN
4	black	18	GROUND
5	green	5	DATA OUT
7	purple	7	COMMAND
10	blue	1	+5 volts

GAUNTLET

Review by Joe Pietrafesa

Imagine you are a mighty warrior or a clever wizard, and you travel into mysterious mazes in search of danger, wealth, and some fun. Then you might want to play Mindscape's version of the arcade hit, *Gauntlet*.

In the game *Gauntlet* you either can play with one or two players and can choose to be one of four characters: Thor the Warrior, Thyra, the Valkyrie, Merlin, the Wizard, or Questor the Elf. Your choice will then be placed in a maze (Level One) where your object is to get as much treasure and wealth as possible, find the exit, and destroy all monsters in your path.

The monsters are many and fierce, and they come at you from all angles. From ghosts to grunts, to sorcerers, these monsters chase you until you kill them, or they kill you! The meanest of them all is everybody's worst enemy—Death. He will drain up to 200 health points and then vanish. He cannot be killed with any weapon except magic.

You will find the dungeons filled with treasure, but you also will find some things to help kill the monsters. Extra armor helps you resist attacks. Extra shot power increases damage inflicted on your enemy, and extra fight power aids you in hand-to-hand combat. Potions are to heal you, and some even make it possible for you to kill the higher level monsters. You also can find amulets to make you become invisible for a short period of time. If you are good at the game, you might find secret exits and walls so you can get to higher levels faster. The higher the level, the greater the challenge. So for all those ambitious players, go for it!

As far as I am concerned, Mindscape's version is nothing compared to the regular arcade game *Gauntlet*. The graphics and sound effects are relatively weak for the home version, the only strong screen being the opening.

After playing the Mindscape game, I decided to give the new Nintendo version of *Gauntlet* a try. I thought that those graphics were much stronger, and the game itself seemed to be better.

However, if you liked the arcade version, and you don't mind spending the money, go ahead and buy it. Who knows, you might like it.

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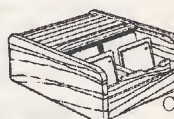
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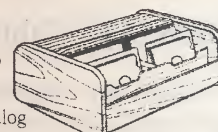
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WAACE CLUB CORNER

This space is made available to WAACE member clubs for their use in publicizing activities. Material for this column must be in the hands of the Clubs Editor by the 10th of each month. Send copy to John Barnes, 7710 Chatham Rd, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Material can also be uploaded to the ARMUDIC BBS.

NOVATARI

Northern Virginia Atari Users' Group

Officers for 1989:

President: Bonnie Little 703-444-2419
ST Vice President: Ed Seward 703-573-3044
8bit Vice president: Nina Kraucunas 703-250-3572
Secretary: Edmund Bedsworth.. 703-536-5958
Treasurer: Gary Purinton 703-476-8391

New Members: Dues are \$20/year/family which includes a subscription to CURRENT NOTES and access to more activities. Join at the main meeting or at a chapter meeting or by sending \$20, payable to NOVATARI, to Edmund Bedsworth, 6617 Rosecroft, Falls Church, VA 22043.

Novatari Main Meeting: second Sunday of the month at the Washington Gas Light Building, 6801 Industrial Rd, Springfield, VA. Take 495 to east on Braddock Rd. (620) to south on Backlick Rd (617). Left on Industrial Rd. Washington Gas Light is the second building on the right. 5:30 Telecom SIG; 6:15 announcements, open forum, door prizes; 6:45 VAST and 8BIT SIG meetings.

Chapter Meetings: Mt. Vernon/Hybla Valley, 1st Thursday, 7:30 Contact Ron Peters at 780-0963. Sterling, Sterling Library, 7:30-9:30, 1st Wed. Contact Richard Gunter at 471-7765.

S.M.A.U.G.

Southern Maryland Atari Users' Group

President.....Herb Scott
Secretary.....Fred Brown 301-645-4009
Treasurer.....Samuel Schrinar 301-843-7916

Meetings: 2nd Thursday, 7:30 pm, John Hanson Middle School in Waldorf, MD. Traveling thru Waldorf either east or west on Rt 5, exit on Vivian Adams located 200 ft west of Waldorf Carpets & Draperies and directly across from the Village Square sign.

New Members: Membership dues are \$20 and include a subscription to CURRENT NOTES. Join at the meeting or send check, payable to SMAUG, to Sam Schrinar, 2032 Alehouse Court, Waldorf, MD 20601.

F.A.C.E.

Frederick Atari Computer Enthusiasts

President.....Chris Rietman 301-791-9170
Vice President.....Mike Kerwin..... 301-845-4477
Treasurer.....Buddy Smallwood 717-485-4714

Meetings: 4th Tuesday, 7 - 9:30 pm, Walkersville HS, MD Route 194, 1 mile north of MD Route 26 (Liberty Road). July and August meetings will be held at St Paul's Lutheran Church, 14 W. Pennsylvania Ave, Walkersville, MD.

New Members: Dues are \$25/year/family and include a subscription to CURRENT NOTES. Join at meeting or send check, payable to FACE, to Buddy Smallwood, PO Box 2026, Frederick, MD 21701.

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Access to the BBS requires a fee in addition to the dues. This fee is \$5/year for NOVATARI members and \$7.50 for members of other user groups. BBS access fees are to be made payable to "NOVATARI" and sent to: Ed Seward, PO Box 2699, Merrifield, VA 22116.

W.A.C.U.G.

Woodbridge Atari Computer Users' Group

President.....Lou Praino 703-221-8193
VP Ron Dunn 703-494-4260
8Bit VP Darrell Stiles 703-494-9819
ST VP Bill Parker 703-680-3941
Treasurer.....David Waalkes 703-490-1225
Secretary.....Jim Sawici 703-670-3527
Librarian Frank Bassett 703-670-8780

Meetings: 7-9PM, Community Room, Potomac Branch, Prince William County Library, Opitz Blvd., Woodbridge, VA. Entering Woodbridge from either North or South on Route 1, proceed to t22he intersection of Route 1 and Opitz Blvd. (opposite Woodbridge Lincoln-Mercury). Turn West on Opitz and take first left turn into the library's parking lot. The Community Room is located to your left immediately upon entering the main building. Meeting Dates: Feb 14, March 28, Apr 18, May 16, June 20.

New Members: Initial membership fee is \$10 plus \$1 monthly dues.

Renewals are \$20 per year, payable as of 1 January. Membership includes a subscription to CURRENT NOTES. Join at meeting or send check, payable to WACUG, to David Waalkes, 1302 Oregon Ave, Woodbridge, VA 22191.

M.A.C.C.

Maryland Atari Computer Club

President.....Jim Hill..... 301-461-7556
Vice President.....Dan Honick 301-356-6453
Treasurer.....John Cromwell 301-356-6453
Secretary.....Bob Brent 301-254-3896
8-bit Librarian Jim Hill (acting)
ST Librarian Tim Caldwell..... 301-687-1413
Newsletter Ed. Charles Smeton 301-465-8628
Corresponding Secy. Cam Whetstone 301-486-2609

Meetings: last Tuesday, 6:30 pm, Pikesville Library, 1 mi. east on Reisterstown Rd from Exit 20 off the Baltimore Beltway.

New Members: Club Dues are \$22/year and include a subscription to CURRENT NOTES. Join at meeting or send check, payable to MACC, to James Hill, 8591 Wheatfield Way, Ellicott City, MD, 21043.

G.R.A.S.P.

Greater Richmond Atari Support Program

President.....Mickey Angell.....804-744-3307
Vice President.....Terry Barker.....804-379-8175
Secretary.....Tom Marvin.....804-233-6155

Meetings: 2nd and 4th Thursday, at La Prade Library, 2730 Hicks Rd.

Dues: \$20 per year (no CURRENT NOTES).

A.U.R.A.

Atari Users Regional Association

President.....Niel Johnson.....301-540-1794
8-bit VP.....Steve Preston.....301-972-9632
16-bit VP.....Ira Horowitz.....301-421-9507
Treasurer.....Bob Brock.....301-268-2554
Membership.....Bill Brown.....301-279-7537
8-bit Librarian.....Wayne Heiden.....301-330-0130
16-bit Librarian.....Joe Russek.....301-946-7593
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Meetings - Third Thursday of each month in the Multipurpose Room at GRACE EPISCOPAL SCHOOL. The school is on the east side of Connecticut Avenue, 1/4 mi. north of the Connecticut Avenue (North) Exit from I-495. Library and swap table sales begin at 7:15, the meeting begins at 7:30. We have separate XL and ST demonstrations. There will be 8-bit and 16-bit door prizes.

Correspondence. All correspondence, including membership renewals, changes of address, etc. should be sent to: AURA, P. O. Box 7761, Silver Spring, MD 20910. AURA cannot guarantee CURRENT NOTES subscription fulfillment unless the member provides written confirmation of address changes, renewals, etc. to the address given above.

New Members. Dues are \$25/year and include subscription to CURRENT NOTES. Send name, address, phone number, and check to above address.

WAACE GOINGS ON NOVATARI NOTES

Bonnie Little, NOVAtari President

The following individuals have agreed to serve as

Committee Chairs for 1989

ST program chair.....Frank Chan.....703-960-0474
8bit program chair.....Al Friedman.....703-425-0575
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8 bit developer.....Roy Brooks.....703-750-0146
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.....Ron Peters.....703-780-0693
Sterling.....Richard Gunter.....703-471-7765
International Liason..Charles Crook.....703-979-4015

Save this issue for these names and numbers and the following meeting times:

Regular meetings for '89 will be Mar.12, Apr.9, May 21, June 11, July 9, Aug.13, Sep.10, Oct.FEST, Nov.12, Dec.10.

Board meetings will be Mar.29, May 10, May 31, June 28, Aug.30, Sep.27, Nov.1, Nov.29 at Nottoway Park.

AURA

Steven Rudolph, Past President

Our March meeting will be on the 16th. Be sure to register for one of our special door prizes. The February Meeting topic was tax preparation and personal finances. On March 16th we will cover Word Processing, April 20th - Digitized Video, May 18 - What's new in Desktop Publishing, and June 15th - Games - Hands On Participation.

AURA is also featuring some new products in its Public Domain libraries that are not yet in the Current Notes collection.

WAACE Executive Board

John Barnes, WAACE Chairman

The WAACE board elected officers at its meeting on January 26th at the Tysons Pimmit Regional Library. John Barnes was chosen as Chairman, Charles Smeton as Vice-Chairman, Russell Brown as secretary, and Tom Stoddard as Treasurer. NOVATARI, AURA, and MACC were the only clubs with representatives at the meeting.

The Meade Atari ST group submitted a letter requesting WAACE membership. Action on this request will be completed when all of the formalities have been dealt with. Another request, from the ST Atari Group of Newark, DE was forwarded to CURRENT NOTES for inclusion in their roster of Associated Clubs. This group is located outside the area described in the WAACE Constitution.

AtariFest '89 planning is underway. Final site and date selection should be complete by the time you read this. Check into ARMUDIC and GENie for the latest news. Johnna Ogden is acting as Vendor Coordinator. The other staff functions will be filled at the March 2nd WAACE Board meeting.

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mond 23224 804-233-6155.
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dBMAN V

All the power of dBASE III+ and more for your Atari ST!!

dBMAN V, in a package of three separate functions: Database Management, Report Printing, and Program Development, is the only database management program which has all the power, flexibility, and capacity that you'll ever need!

At the Database Management level, *dBMAN V* allows you to structure, enter, retrieve, and modify data. At home, *dBMAN V* can keep track of your recipes, address book, video tape library, and more. In the office, *dBMAN V* can be programmed to manage your entire business including inventory control, payroll, invoicing, and billing.

At the Report Printing level, *dBMAN V* has an integrated, high-powered, and fully relational report writer that allows you to create reports in a flash with absolutely no programming!

Report layouts are designed by placing fields at the desired locations on the screen.

This can easily be accomplished with the built-in cut, paste, and copy functions. The finished screen-layout reflects the printed output. From simple personal reports like recipe cards, mailing list, and video tape libraries, to complex business reports such as inventory count sheets, packing lists, employee payroll reports and customer billing statements are easily created.

At the Program Development level, *dBMAN V* is the only database manager for the Atari ST that is compatible with the dBASE III Plus language. With this awesome programming power, you can develop and customize any programs to fill your home and business needs. For your home, create a check book program, with complete bank statement balancing to manage your

personal finances. For your office, customize a complete accounting system to fit your business needs.

Also available for *dBMAN V* is the high performance Greased Lightning compiler. This compiler fully supports macros, and executes dBASE programs up to 16 times faster than dBASE III Plus.

dBMAN is also available on Novell Netware, IBM PCNET, PC DOS, SCO Xenix, UNIX on NCR Tower, NEC ASTRA XL, Motorola 8000, Altos, Microport 286 and 386, Apple Macintosh, and Commodore Amiga.



***dBMAN V*'s features:**

- ✓ dBASE II and dBASE III Plus compatibility
- ✓ Easy-to-use, pull-down menu interface to create, add, edit, and report database information
- ✓ 320 programmable commands and functions
- ✓ Password protection and data security at field level
- ✓ Easily transport your dBASE III data files and programs between Atari ST and PC's
- ✓ Extensive data validation including range checking
- ✓ Single command menus: vertical, horizontal, scrollable and pull down menus
- ✓ User defined pop-up windows
- ✓ Create a GEM pull down menu, mouse menu and file selector
- ✓ Run GEM application from *dBMAN*
- ✓ Program debugger/editor. And more...

Report Writer features:

- ✓ 9 group levels
- ✓ Up to 255 columns and 255 lines per page
- ✓ Page headers, page footers, group headers, group footers, titles, summaries, and body lines
- ✓ Print labels up to 99 across
- ✓ Conditional printing of any items
- ✓ Compute running sums, counts, averages, minimums and maximums
- ✓ Relate and report from up to 9 database files with lookup (one to one) and scan (one to many) relations. And more...

Specifications:

- ✓ Field types: Character, Numeric, Date, Logical, Memo
- ✓ Maximum characters per field: 254
- ✓ Maximum number of records per database: 2 billion
- ✓ Maximum number of index files: no limit
- ✓ Maximum record size: 4000 bytes
- ✓ Numeric precision: 17 digits

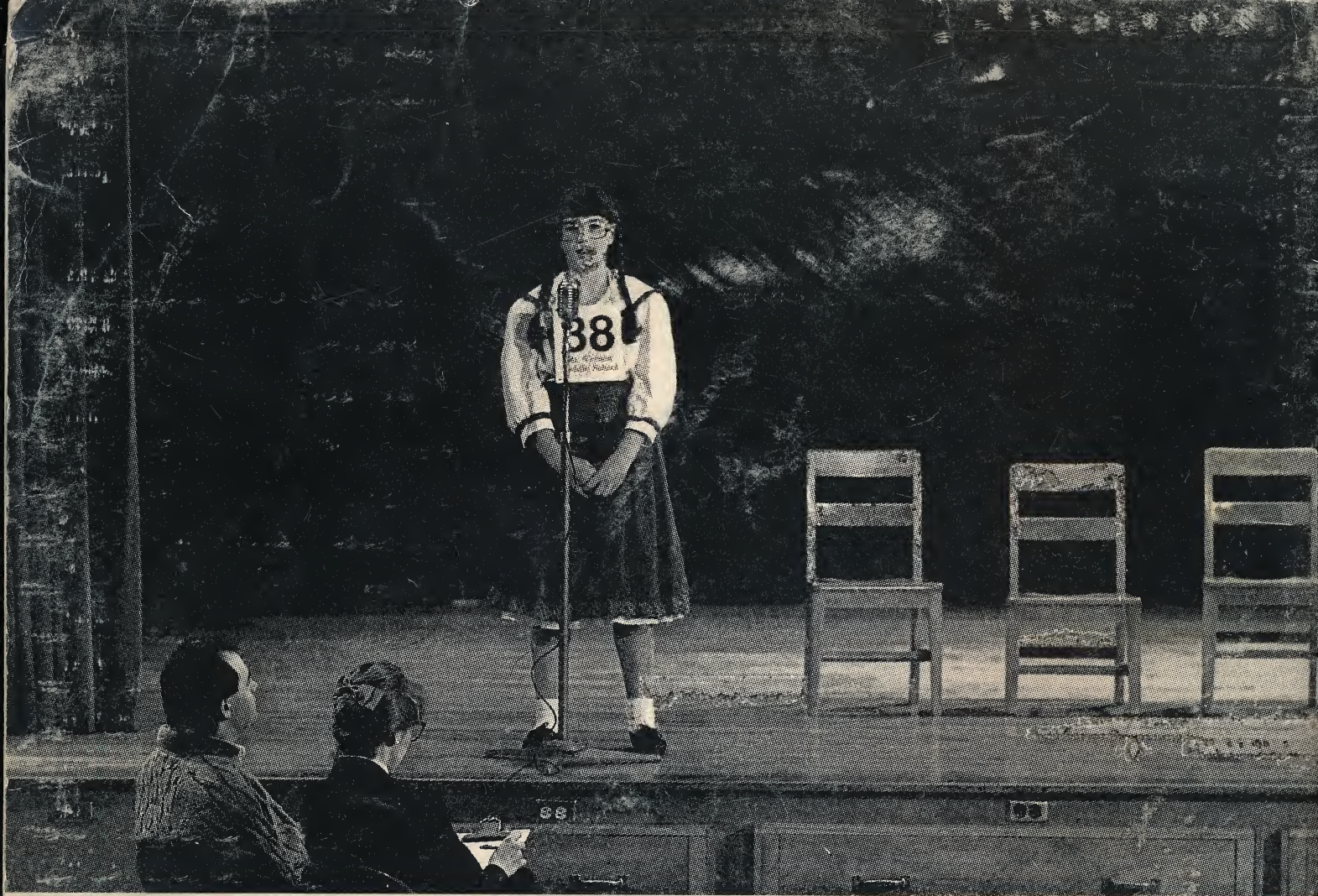
System Requirements:

- ✓ Atari 520, 1040, or MEGA ST with one floppy drive and 480K free RAM.



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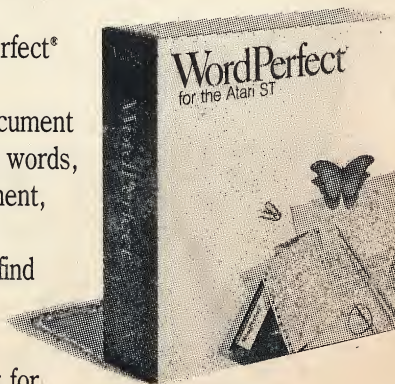
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